

Managing Drug and Alcohol Misuse at Work: Guidance for Managers

The University's Alcohol and Drug Policy is designed to ensure that individuals are aware of the risks associated with alcohol/drug misuse and the potential consequences. This supporting guidance has been developed to help line managers to effectively support and manage someone who is struggling with drugs and/or alcohol to obtain help and support.

Line managers are ideally placed to be able to spot and address issues such as high workloads, long working hours and stress, as well as early warning signs of issues, and signpost people to support if needed.

Signs of an alcohol and/or drug related problem may include:

- Smelling of alcohol
- Loss of balance
- Slurred speech
- Poor hygiene
- Sudden mood changes
- Unusual irritability and/or aggression
- Abnormal fluctuations in concentration or energy
- Impaired work performance and time keeping
- Increased sickness absence, particularly individual days such as around a weekend
- Deterioration in personal relationships
- Dishonesty and/or theft

Specialist advice, help and support

It is important that managers do not attempt to fix the issues but encourage the individual to seek specialist help and support, such as:

Sources of help

- Their GP or other medical professional
- A specialist alcohol and/or drug support referral agency (see list below)
- Their Line Manager or Head of Department
- HR Business Partner or HR Manager
- Health and Safety Representative (for staff) or Personal Tutor (for students)
- Occupational Health can offer initial support via a management or HR Business Partner referral, and direct staff to appropriate services
- The University's [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP). This is a confidential support service designed to help employees with personal and professional problems including psychological issues around alcohol/drug misuse. The EAP service is entirely confidential and individuals who use the service cannot be identified by the University.
- University's [Wellbeing and Student Support Services](#) or 024 7657 5570
- [Students' Union Advice Centre](#) or 024 7657 2824

External Support Agencies

- Change Grow Live – a charity organisation specialising in alcohol, drug and substance misuse. Services are free and confidential. <https://www.changegrowlive.org/get-in-touch/contact-us>
- Drinkline – a government-funded free service, which can provide advice to the alcohol drinker, or anybody concerned about the drinker. Has a database of local support and treatment services that can help the drinker. *Helpline: 0800 917 8282 Website: www.drinkaware.co.uk*
- Talk to FRANK – a government-funded free service, previously named the National Drugs Helpline. Can provide advice to the drug user or anybody concerned about the drug user. Has a database of local support and treatment services that can help the drug user. The focus of the helpline is for young people and concerned parents, but will also assist adult drug users. *Helpline: 0800 77 66 00 Website: www.talktofrank.com*
- Alcoholics Anonymous – the largest self-help group for people who acknowledge they cannot handle alcohol, and want a new way of life without it. Services are free. *Helpline: 0845 769 7555 Website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk*
- Narcotics Anonymous – the largest self-help group for people who want to stop using drugs. Services are free. *Helpline: 0845 373 3366 Website: www.ukna.org*
- Adfam National – the largest non-statutory organisation that works with and on behalf of families affected by drug and alcohol problems. Helpful for the family of the alcohol or drug user. *Helpline: 020 7553 7640 Website: www.adfam.org.uk*

If you suspect an individual has a drug/alcohol related problem or an individual discloses that they may have a drug/alcohol related problem:

- Find a confidential location where you won't be disturbed to have a private conversation
- Allow sufficient time for the conversation at a time where you have no other commitments scheduled
- Ensure the conversation is not rushed and the individual has the opportunity to discuss everything they may need to
- Treat them in a non-judgemental manner
- Signpost the various support options available to them
- Discuss the issue with your HR Business Partner or HR Manager as soon as possible.
- Maintain confidentiality as far as possible. Tell the individual that there may be a need to make others aware (for example the HR contact).
- Remind the individual of their responsibilities as detailed in the University's Alcohol and Drugs Policy.
- Keep a record of the conversation and the nature of the issue discussed.
- Take action immediately if there are safety-critical issues or concern for the individual's welfare.
- Consider any other health and safety implications – are there any other aspects of their role that may put them or others at risk?
- Recognise that each individual case will be unique. Listen to the individual's concerns and respect their needs as far as possible.
- Set regular periods to check-in with them

Further information on the effects of alcohol and drugs on health and safety is available from Occupational Health at www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/healthsafetywellbeing/guidance/occupationalhealth.

Key recommendations

- Create an environment where people feel able to ask for support. Creating an environment where people feel able to ask for help, knowing they will be supported and signposted to help, is important.
- Ensure you know what support and resources are available for your team. Discuss these with your HR team and make sure the support available is communicated to your team.
- You should feel capable and confident to manage and support employees, but don't feel you need to be the expert or handle everything on your own. Make sure you know who to contact in HR for advice and support.
- Avoid fuelling a drinking culture – consider the implications for wellbeing and inclusion when planning work events.
- Support employee rehabilitation. It is important to be flexible and understanding about providing time off for someone to get treatment or support relating to alcohol or substance misuse.
- If you are dealing with an issue, ask the individual about the support they need, as everyone's situation will be different. Some people may require time out to get help, others may need flexibility in working time to attend appointments, and some people may require role adjustments such as addressing a high workload or stress levels.

Source: CIPD, Guidance for Line Managers, 2022