Alcohol and Drug Consumption

Did you know that Alcohol Misuse costs the NHS £3.5 Billion per year, and 167,000 working years were lost to alcohol in 2015?

Employers have a legal duty to protect employee health, safety, and welfare. Understanding the signs of drug and alcohol misuse (or abuse) will help you to manage health and safety risk in your workplace, develop a policy to deal with drug and alcohol-related problems, and support your employees.

Employees have a duty to watch for any signs of another person misusing alcohol. Being aware of this and bringing it to light in the correct manner can help keep the employee, the employer, and the business safe.

Consider these warning signs, which could indicate drug or alcohol misuse:

- Unexplained or frequent absences.
- A change in behaviour.
- Unexplained dips in productivity.
- More accidents or near-misses.
- Performance or conduct issues.

Businesses have policies in place regarding the misuse of Alcohol. If you are unsure of this, then it can be found in the main Health and Safety Policy of your workplace and employee handbooks.

Drug and Alcohol dependence is a recognised medical problem. Someone who is misusing alcohol or drugs has the same rights to confidentiality and support as they would if they had any other medical or psychological condition.

EMPLOYERS have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees. If alcohol misuse results in breaking the law, the employer is duty bound to act.

EMPLOYEES must also take reasonable care of themselves and anyone who could be affected by their work.

There are many specialist advisors who deal with alcohol misuse, from GPs to local AA groups and online and phone support organisations. The best way to start making positive steps is to ask for help.

DRINKLINE – National free alcohol helpline – 0300 123 1110
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS – 0800 917 7650
FRANK: Talk to Frank – 0300 123 6600
ACAS – ADVISORY, CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION SERVICE. ACAS works with millions of employers and employees every year to improve workplace relationships. It’s an independent public body that receives funding from the government.

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