

# SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY - SUGGESTED INCLUSIONS



## **There is no such thing as a standard substance misuse policy.**

All organisations are different and need to have a policy to suit their own needs.

However, there are certain things that need to be said, certain areas that must be covered for a policy to be effective.

A policy should have clear aims and objectives.

It should state its purpose.

It should outline how the company is going to deal with alcohol and drugs and substance abuse.

It should make it clear who has overall responsibility for implementing the policy.

It should refer to relevant legislation.

It should be written in consultation with employees or employees' representatives. It's also useful to include occupational health staff and line managers.

It should be applicable to all employees regardless of status and includes contractors.

It should include a statement guaranteeing confidentiality.

It should guarantee that any employees who ask for help will be treated in a non-judgemental and supportive way.

It should explain how it intended to prevent alcohol and drug problems at work.

It should state a commitment to health and safety and well-being of all employees.

It should explain the importance of early identification and treatment. And the dangers to the person and to their colleagues of leaving untreated.

It should explain how it was going to help someone with these problems. It could list the people who are available to help, such as managers, supervisors, company doctor, occupational health service or outside agency.

It should clearly state the rules on alcohol, drugs and other substances at work.

For example, if alcohol is allowed in the workplace, this should be made clear and it should state when it can be consumed while at work or on work premises. You may need to consider consumption and the use of company vehicles.

It should have procedures explaining roles and responsibilities of management when dealing with these problems.

It should have clear procedures for dealing with employees whose work performance is adversely affected by alcohol.

This may include referral for counselling or treatment. What to do in the case of a relapse.

It should show a commitment to education, training and monitoring.

It should ensure that managers are trained to spot the signs and deal with any problems early.

Alcohol and drug misuse are often dealt with as medical rather than disciplinary matters. In this case it should include a statement that the company recognises that drinks or drugs problems may be illnesses and will be treated in the same way as other illnesses. There should be recognition that in many cases alcohol and drug use can lead to addiction, which may require help.

The policy should say how employees can get help.

If absence for treatment will be regarded as normal sickness absence, it should state this and, if it's the case, the provision of paid sick leave for agreed treatment.

It should state the person's right to return to the same job after effective treatment and any conditions that may apply.

The policy should outline under what circumstances disciplinary action may be taken.

For example, an organisation may agree to suspend disciplinary action on condition that a suitable course of action is followed, but if help is refused, no improvements made and other people are being put at risk then this explains what will happen. It could say that possession of drugs or dealing in drugs at work will be reported immediately to the police. It could state that being unfit for work due to drink or drugs will result in immediate dismissal.

It should state whether further periods of treatment will be allowed if there is a repeat instance.

It should say that possession or dealing in illegal drugs will be reported immediately to the police and dismissal, and that there is no alternative to this.

It should state what the consequences are if an employee refuses help and the problem continues.

It should say that gross misconduct will result in dismissal.

The policy should be monitored and reviewed.