

Policy for Dealing with Alcohol and Drugs at Work

1. Introduction

Purpose

This guidance sets out RBK's policy and procedure for dealing with problems at work which arise as a result of the misuse of alcohol or drugs.

The objectives of the policy are:

- to reduce alcohol or drug related problems at work such as increased absenteeism, poor time keeping, high sickness levels, accidents at work, impaired work performance;
- to help motivate those employees whose drinking habits or use of drugs affect their work performance, to seek and accept appropriate counselling or treatment;
- to prevent alcohol or drug misuse problems arising by promoting awareness of health information on alcohol and drugs to employees

Scope

This policy has been agreed by the former Personnel Committee to be applied to the generality of RBK employees irrespective of grade or position.

Statement of Policy

RBK recognises that the misuse of alcohol or drugs may place the health of employees at risk and may affect the capability of employees to perform their duties.

Employees who have alcohol or drug related problems will be regarded for employment purposes as suffering from an illness and accordingly will be encouraged to seek help and treatment voluntarily. However the use of the Council's disciplinary procedure is not precluded where an employee while under the influence of alcohol or other substances behaves in a manner contrary to the standards of safety and behaviour required by the Council of its employees. The Council's capability procedure may be used to deal with alcohol or drug related problems which perpetuate and breach rules about capability relating to poor performance or ill health absences.

(See RBK's procedures for dealing with problems at work involving Conduct/Capability)
It is recognised that rules on the consumption of alcohol and use of drugs are necessary to set out clearly RBK's expectation of the behaviour of employees.

The policy will operate with full regard to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Health Promotion

Information on the consumption of alcohol and the use of drugs will be available to employees through the Occupational Health Unit and from time to time through health promotion campaigns.

Confidentiality

Alcohol or drug related work problems which are identified will be dealt with sensitively. Any personal or medical information which is divulged by an employee, with an alcohol/drug problem to his/her supervisor, the Staff Welfare Officer or Occupational Health Staff, will be confidential. Employees who have concerns that alcohol or drug related problems may exist in the workplace will be able to raise such concerns in confidence.

Representation

Employees may be represented at each stage of the procedure by a Trade Union Representative, or other person of their choice.

Communicating the Policy

All employees will be advised of the alcohol and drugs at work policy and its implications for their behaviour at work. The availability of assistance and advice on alcohol/drug related issues will be highlighted.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Employees

All employees have a responsibility to make the policy work.

Employees are required to familiarise themselves and abide by the standards required at work in relation to the consumption of alcohol and use of drugs.

Employees with alcohol or drug problems will be encouraged to seek help and assistance and have a responsibility, for their own well being and safety and that of colleagues, to take advantage of any support which is offered.

Employees who are concerned that alcohol/drug related problems exist in the workplace are encouraged to raise these concerns with their manager.

Role of Managers/Supervisors

Managers and Supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that employees for whom they are responsible are aware of general and specific rules and standards and procedures relating to the use of alcohol/drugs in the context of their employment. They should be aware that their normal behavior in relation to the use of alcohol/drugs may influence members of staff for whom they are responsible. As part of the normal management process managers and supervisors should be alert to and monitor changes in work performance, attendance, sickness and accident patterns. Managers/Supervisors should intervene at an early stage where there are signs of problems and refer employees for assistance where appropriate.

Role of Staff Welfare/Occupational Health

The Staff Welfare Officer is available to provide an impartial and confidential service to employees which may include counselling, assessment and/or referral to another agency.

Occupational Health staff will provide opportunities for employees to become aware of the health risks associated with the misuse of alcohol/drugs and to promote awareness of the levels of sensible drinking.

Pre-employment health checks and any health assessments will take full account of the circumstances and nature of the employee's work.

In the context of ill health referral procedure Occupational Health may be required to provide advice to managers, through Human Resources Services, on the sickness/accident patterns of an employee who may be suffering from an alcohol/drug related problem. Managers will be informed about an Employee's progress in terms of his/her fitness for work but not in relation to personal/confidential circumstances.

Role of Human Resources Services

Human Resources Services is responsible for coordinating the policy and ensuring its effective communication in RBK. Employees with alcohol/drug related problems will be encouraged to seek help. Human Resources Services will provide advice and guidance to Managers identifying possible alcohol/drug related problems in the workplace and appropriate strategies for dealing with them.

Role of Trade Unions

Trade Unions support this policy and any health promotion initiatives relating to the use of alcohol and drugs. Trade Unions will represent individual employees where appropriate.

3. Rules: RBK's Expectations of Employees

The following section sets out RBK's expectation of its employees' behaviour at work in relation to the consumption of alcohol/use of drugs. Employees, in particular those whose duties involve driving, the use of machinery or have regular contact with members of the public will be advised of the following rules as part of the induction process by managers. Employees should be aware of their responsibilities under the Health and Safety Legislation (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 8).

Rules relating to the consumption of alcohol and to the use of drugs:

- Employees have a responsibility to ensure they are fit to work and their capability to perform their duties should be unimpaired by the misuse of alcohol or drugs. Employees should be aware that misuse outside work may affect their capability at work.
- In addition to the question of capability, employees should be aware particularly when working with the public, that smelling of alcohol can create an unsatisfactory impression and could undermine confidence.
- The misuse of alcohol by employees in the course of their duties is unacceptable.
- Possession of alcohol on work premises in circumstances which may reasonably be regarded as giving rise to misuse will not be acceptable - careful investigations would take place before any action was taken.
- On occasions when alcoholic drinks are available to employees on work premises eg social occasions, employees should be aware of the general requirement set out in 3.2.1 and take a sensible approach to the use of alcohol.
- The misuse of prescribed drugs and substances such as solvents by employees on duty is unacceptable.
- The possession or use of illegal drugs by employees on Council premises is totally unacceptable and may lead to a criminal prosecution.

These standards are designed to define good practice and breaches of such practice will be dealt with under this procedure or the disciplinary/capability procedures, as appropriate depending on the circumstances of the case.

4. Procedure

Identification of an alcohol/drugs related problem at work

Indications that an employee is suffering from problems at work which may be associated with his/her misuse of alcohol/drugs may be identified by deteriorating work performance, poor attendance/timekeeping, high level of sickness/accidents, changed attitude at work, appearance etc. and/or breaches in the standards relating to the use of alcohol/drugs. Such indications of concern may first be identified by work colleagues (either peers, managers or subordinates). In order to deal effectively with such problems, to ensure that they do not

escalate and that the employee can be given appropriate help and advice, it is important that such identification takes place at an early stage.

Accordingly colleagues are encouraged to advise the appropriate manager/supervisor of any concerns they have over an employee's potential misuse of alcohol/drugs in confidence. Where an employee has a potential problem related to their use of alcohol/drugs, they can, if they wish raise the problem with their manager who will advise them in line with the principles set out in this policy. Alternatively, they may approach the Staff Welfare Officer for help and advice. This is a confidential service.

Informal Action

Where concerns have been raised in connection with an employees potential misuse of alcohol/drugs, the manager/supervisor will, as part of the normal management process, arrange to discuss his/her concerns with the employee, promptly, on an informal basis.

The aims of the discussion will be to focus attention on the work related problems, to try to establish causes and to explore and identify possible remedies. Should an employee divulge that the work problems may be associated with their use of alcohol/drugs, the supervisor should advise the employee of the availability of Staff Welfare Officers confidential counselling services. The manager will be supportive to the employee in overcoming any problems which are identified. However, the manager will also make clear the nature and extent of the improvement required and the timescale for improvement. Managers will have a responsibility not to tolerate any breach of safe working practice which could endanger the employee or others. Arrangements will be made to monitor and review the situation.

Formal Action

If it is necessary to consider formal action it will be appropriate to use the Council's procedures as described below.

III Health Referral Procedure

Where an employee's sickness record is a cause for concern (possibly related to the misuse of alcohol/drugs) the manager will in accordance with normal practice refer his/her to Occupational Health for a view on their fitness for work.

Capability Procedure

If despite managerial intervention at the end of an agreed period(s) of review, the manager considers that insufficient improvement in performance/attendance or other work problem has been made, it may be necessary to convene a formal hearing under the RBK's capability procedure. Full account will be taken of the employees problems and the extent to which he/she has taken advantage of any help/assistant offered.

Disciplinary Procedure

Any breach of the disciplinary rules in relation to the consumption of alcohol or use of drugs at work will be dealt with under the RBK's disciplinary procedure. Any health problems which

an employee may volunteer in mitigation will be taken into account prior to deciding on any disciplinary action.

5. Conclusion

It is recognised that despite efforts to help and support employees with alcohol/drugs related problems at work, that, if such problems are not resolved, ultimately dismissal on the grounds of lack of capability or misconduct or ill health retirement could be an outcome. However, each case will be dealt with on its merits and it is the intention of this procedure that by identifying and dealing with problems at an early stage that such serious action can be avoided.