

A hand holding a small glass bottle of amber-colored liquid, likely alcohol, in front of a row of yellow binders. The binders have white labels and circular cutouts. The background is a light-colored wall.

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EMPLOYER GUIDE

MANAGING DRUG AND ALCOHOL
ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

MANAGING DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE



The issue of Drug and Alcohol misuse at work has always existed, it should not be taken lightly and must be dealt with, as it can affect employee's health and safety, work performance and conduct.

It is important that employers have a Drug and Alcohol Misuse policy in place and all employees are aware of the policy and that they know what is expected of them and what the consequences are if they are in breach of the policy, and whom they can go to if they need help.

Sometimes in the workplace, a Drug and Alcohol Policy is also known as a Substance Misuse Policy. These policies provide the employer with the option to discipline employees where needed and also to offer support for employees to get the help that they may need.

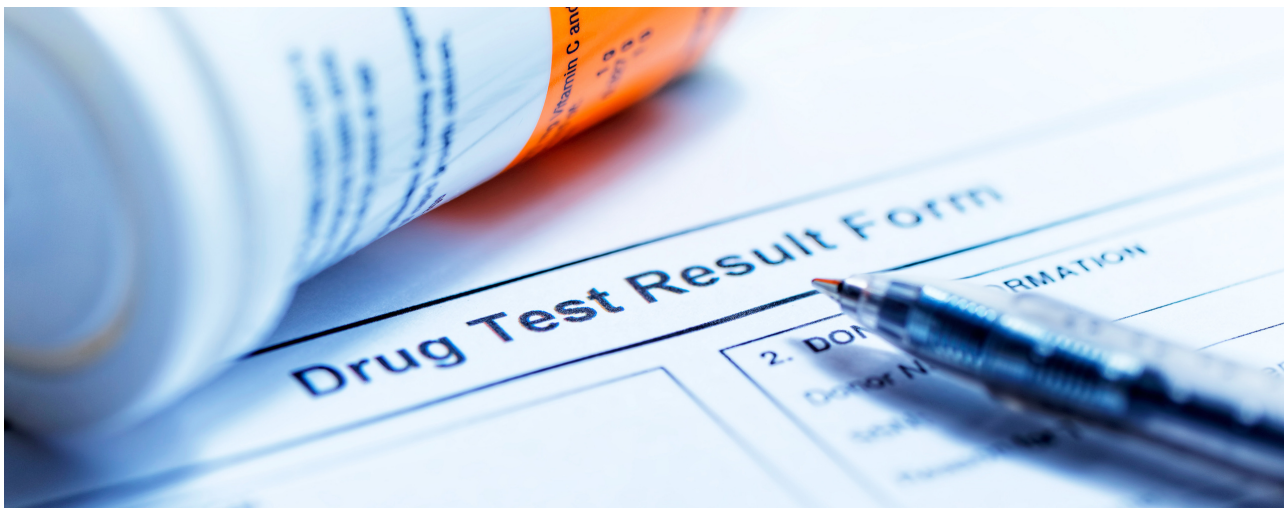
These policies should be in place to help with employee wellbeing, they should contain information on support available to employees to help with any rehabilitation they may need, as long as they agree and follow the process.

TESTING EMPLOYEES

Employers may wish to have the option within the policy to be able to test an employee for the presence of Alcohol and Drugs. Testing of employees can only be done if testing is included within the Drug and Alcohol policy, employers are not able to just decide they wish to perform a test on a certain employee.

Testing employees within a policy can be done as **random testing** (doing unannounced tests periodically) or to test where there **is** cause for concern, or you can do both. Employers also may wish to have testing as part of the recruitment process, so an offer of employment is made, on the condition the candidate passes a drug and alcohol test.

It is important that employers ensure that all managers are trained on how to deal with an employee that may be experiencing a drug or alcohol problem. Managers need to have the confidence and skill to be able to have sensitive and private conversations with their employees.



LOOKING OUT FOR THE SIGNS

Warning signs of an employee being under the influence of Drugs or Alcohol can be :

- Unexplained or frequent absence
- A change in conduct and behaviour
- Reduced productivity
- Frequent accidents or near misses

WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A SITUATION IN THE WORKPLACE?

If managers come across a situation where an employee appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol in the workplace the following action is advised to be taken by the manager:

- Quietly remove the employee from the immediate situation.
- Set the scene and establish the facts, advise the employee that you have concerns and would like them to undergo a drug and alcohol test (if applicable in the situation and in line with company policy). During this discussion see if the employee offers you any information or reason for their behaviour, for example taking new medication for an illness or if they admit they have been drinking or taken something prior to attending work, or during work. Make notes of any important information that may be discussed.
- Explain that you will be arranging for a test to be conducted (if this is in line with company policy). Employees can refuse to have a test, but this may not be in their best interest. Explain to employees that they will be required to give their written consent to a test and are required to declare any medication/substance they have taken recently.
- Arrange for someone to sit with and supervise the employee until the test can be conducted. This should be a quiet area somewhere out of view, and away from contact with other employees/colleagues. The employee is not permitted to remain working.



- If an employee refuses to take the test, and you have a reasonable belief that they are under the influence then you should continue with the investigation process and suspend the employee as per company policy. Once the test has been completed if the results are:
 - **Negative** then the employee potentially can return to work, if you deem them fit to do so, if not then you may think it appropriate to send them home (This would be managed under the normal absence policy rules).
 - **Non-negative/Positive result** - the employee will need to be suspended from work, on full pay, until the final results are obtained after further analysis, and then after investigation, they will be called to a disciplinary hearing.

If testing is in the policy, the procedures to follow should be fully documented and all managers made aware of the processes to follow.

MANAGING DRUG & ALCOHOL MISUSE IS AN IMPORTANT AREA FOR EMPLOYERS TO ADDRESS



Just **over a third** of employers have disciplined someone in the past two years for alcohol misuse and just over a quarter for drug misuse.



Around a **fifth of employers** have dismissed someone in the last two years where a significant reason was drug and/or alcohol misuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE

- Have a clear policy in place that helps to support employees and their wellbeing and sets out clear guidelines of what will happen.
 - Ensure all managers are trained to deal with D&A Abuse, so that they feel confident to manage and support employees.
 - Communicate to all employees the support that is available so they know they can ask for help if they need this. This should be included in any employee wellbeing projects also.
 - Avoid planning work events that encourage a drinking culture.
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YOUR TRUSTED PEOPLE ADVISORS

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