



COLEG POWYS

**ALCOHOL AND DRUG
MISUSE AT WORK
POLICY**

JUNE 2000

STATEMENT OF POLICY ON ALCOHOL AND DRUG MISUSE AT WORK

Introduction

Coleg Powys is aware that drinking related problems are costly in human and economic terms, through absenteeism, sickness, accidents and poor work performance.

The College has agreed this policy which forms a framework on which to base the approach to the strategy and guidelines on alcohol and drug misuse at work.

The College is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed, monitored and evaluated.

Definitions

Alcohol related problems

Any drinking, either intermittent or continual, at whatever time or place, which interferes with an employee's functioning and performance in any aspect of his/her job.

Drug misuse

Drug misuse is taken to include the careless or excessive use of prescribed drugs, such as tranquillisers, as well as illicit substances. (See Appendix II).

Solvent misuse

Solvent misuse is not just associated with glue, as many solvents may be used.

Aims of this Policy

- to alert all employees to the risks associated with inappropriate drinking, drug and solvent misuse;
- to reduce the possibility of losing good employees;
- to maintain good health and safety standards;
- to provide information, education and confidential help and support to those whose alcohol consumption etc. is affecting work performance or to those who are worried about their drinking habit;
- to reduce sickness absence levels.

STATEMENT OF POLICY ON ALCOHOL

1. Implementation

All managers are responsible for taking action if an employee is identified as having a work problem, which may be associated with alcohol consumption or if an employee identifies himself/herself as having a drink related problem.

2. Information, Education and Training

The College will make available to employees a copy of this policy and information about alcohol, its effects and sensible drinking.

Specific training will be given to those who, under this policy, have special responsibility for implementing it. Alcohol related issues will be incorporated into existing and new training courses, where appropriate, e.g. induction, health and safety, employee development.

(Further information and advice can be obtained from a variety of sources. See Appendix I).

3. Confidentiality

All personnel information is confidential and will be kept so.

Any information concerning an employee's medical condition will be subject to the highest professional and ethical standards that exist to safeguard confidentiality.

4. Course of Action

Advice and support should be made available to employees with a suspected alcohol related problem even though the problem may not yet be affecting performance.

Employees who suspect or know they have an alcohol related problem should seek specialist help voluntarily. This may be through a number of sources, including a General Practitioner or a Specialist External Agency. Line Managers, Personnel Officers, and Trade Union Representatives will be able to advise on where to obtain this specialist help.

Equally, where an employee believes a colleague may be suffering from alcohol related problems he/she should encourage their colleague to seek help from those sources mentioned above.

Line Managers are encouraged to offer basic information and advice to employees with suspected drink related problems, which are not yet affecting performance. Encouragement to seek and accept help is on the understanding that employees, while receiving help, will be entitled to their contractual sickness benefits and pension rights as provided in their terms and conditions of service.

A distinction needs to be made between problem drinking and the occasional irresponsible behaviour arising from excessive drinking on particular occasions. The latter situation may be more properly dealt with by the manager as conduct at work or performance of duty, which may lead to disciplinary action.

As a general rule the College discourages lunchtime drinking by its employees. Repeated occurrences of this activity will lead to disciplinary action being taken. There are however, specific activities, which could take place during the afternoon, which the College believes it would be inappropriate to consume alcohol. Examples of these activities include:

- where an employee can be expected to drive any motor vehicle on College business;
- operating power machinery where there could be a risk to safety such as in the use of chainsaws, woodworking machinery etc.
- working at height;
- where the activity could affect the College's image when dealing with the general public or other persons not in the College's employment.

The consumption of alcohol prior to these activities may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

When, during the course of a disciplinary hearing, the disciplinary officer believes that the conduct or work performances which could lead to disciplinary action is in fact an indication of alcohol related problems then referral to the General Practitioner or Specialist External Agency may be a more appropriate course of action.

If, in the circumstances outlined above, an employee refuses referral then appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

If an employee accepts referral and an alcohol or other personal problem is diagnosed, steps will be taken to ensure that the employee is provided with such help as is appropriate.

If an employee refuses to co-operate with any appropriate treatment programme, disciplinary procedures would continue.

An employee who is absent from work to receive counselling or treatment may be asked to satisfy the College that they are keeping their appointments and co-operating with an appropriate treatment programme.

It is important that, wherever possible, problems relating to unsatisfactory conduct or performance are dealt with as close to the source of the problem as possible.

5. Rehabilitation

The College recognises that it may take an employee a period of time to re-adjust during recovery. During this period, the manager should work closely with the employee, to ensure sympathetic consideration and support. Signs of relapse should be monitored closely and if it becomes apparent that the employee has not overcome his/her drinking problem, further discussion should be arranged in consultation with the Personnel Department and provider of treatment.

There are areas of work where particular problems might occur if an employee has an alcohol related problem and in such cases the College may have to make special arrangements to ensure that employees do not put themselves, the College or others at risk. In such cases, it may be necessary to transfer the employee on a permanent or temporary basis, to another area of work. This would only take place after full consultation with the employee concerned.

6. Early Retirement

There may be circumstances in which the health of the individual suggests that consideration should be given to early retirement on the grounds of ill health. The appropriate procedures should be followed.

7. Health and Safety

The general duties imposed by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 arguably impose an obligation upon the employer to do what is reasonably practicable to identify alcohol related problems so far as they affect peoples health and safety at work. No employee should be allowed to endanger others, while under the influence of alcohol. Likewise, Employees who are under the influence of alcohol while at work may similarly be in breach of their duty imposed by the above Act to take care of themselves and others while they are at work.

Appendix I

**Alcoholics Anonymous
Aberystwyth Area**

Tel: (01970) 625574

**Alcohol Advisory Service
Hereford**

Tel: (01432) 357825

Appendix II

Summary of the Legal Position

Drugs

Under the Misuse of Drugs Act it is generally illegal to possess or supply a drug covered by the Act (a controlled drug), unless authorised by the Act (e.g. possessing drugs prescribed for one's own medical use).

Should any unauthorised controlled drugs be found on College premises, it is the manager's responsibility to hand them over to the police. It may not be immediately obvious whether drugs are legal or illegal, for individual use or supply to others. Circumstances may vary and the manager should be careful to exercise discretion.

Should an employee discover unauthorised controlled drug being used or offered for supply on College premises, the Principal should be informed immediately, who will contact the Police.

It may be advisable to suspend employees found to be intoxicated or having been involved in illicit drug related behaviour at work, in order to safeguard themselves, and others. Each case should be judged on its merits after allowing the employee an opportunity to explain the position and obtaining advice from local professionals and support organisations.

General

It is possible for a prosecution to be brought under the Health and Safety at Work Act if an individual has not taken due care of themselves and others at the workplace. In most cases a common sense approach which leads to the speedy removal of anyone who is known to be under the influence of drugs, alcohol or solvents from an area where they risk injury to themselves and others because of their condition, should be seen as sufficient to avoid prosecution.