

Alcohol and Substance Abuse Policy

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Document History	
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1. Introduction

Reading Borough Council is committed to:

- ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its staff and those affected by its activities. It will take all reasonable steps to reduce, if not eliminate, the risk of injuries or incidents occurring due to individuals suffering from the effects of alcohol or substance abuse.
- creating a climate that encourages employees who may be misusing drugs or alcohol to come forward and seek help
- enabling instances of substance misuse by employees to be handled in an appropriate, fair and consistent manner
- achieving a balance between supporting employees who come forward with a problem and the overriding need to preserve the health, safety and welfare of employees and others with whom they come into contact

2. Scope

- This policy covers the use and misuse of intoxicating substances, which include alcohol, solvents, legal and illegal drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and other substances that could adversely affect work performance and/or health and safety.
- This policy applies to all employees, including all agency and casual workers, contractors, volunteers and others working on the employer's behalf.
- The policy is not intended to apply to 'one-off' incidents or offences where there is no evidence of an ongoing problem, which are more appropriately dealt with under the disciplinary procedure, when applicable.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The employer is responsible for maintaining fair, consistent and objective procedures for matters relating to the inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs.
- 3.2 Within the limits of what is practicable and within the law, strict confidentiality will be maintained when dealing with alcohol- and drug-related problems among employees.

Managers are required to:

- be aware of the signs of alcohol and substance misuse and the effects on performance, attendance and health of employees, and take reasonable and appropriate steps
- ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others with whom they come into contact
- ensure that staff are aware of the policy and the rules and consequences regarding the use of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances
- treat such matters confidentially as far as is legitimately and legally possible

- monitor the performance, behaviour and attendance of employees as part of the normal supervisory relationship
- intervene at an early stage, where changes in performance, behaviour, sickness levels or attendance patterns are identified, to establish whether alcohol or drug misuse is an underlying cause. Such investigation should be supportive and non-judgemental
- provide support and assistance where appropriate and for a reasonable period, and ensure that staff are aware of the support that is available to them
- seek advice from Human Resources where the manager has concerns or is aware that an employee is adversely impacted due to drugs and/or alcohol.

Employees are required to:

- familiarise themselves with this policy and comply with its provisions
- present a professional, courteous and efficient image to those with whom they come into contact at work. They therefore have a personal responsibility to adopt a responsible attitude towards drinking and taking prescribed and non-prescribed drugs
- not to possess, store, trade or sell controlled drugs on Council premises or bring the Council into disrepute by engaging in such activities outside of work
- seek help if they have concerns regarding their alcohol or drug consumption.
- co-operate with any support and assistance provided
- not, even with the best of motives, to 'cover up' for, or collude with, a colleague with an alcohol or drug-related problem but instead should encourage the individual to seek help
- where the individual concerned does not wish to come forward to seek help, and their colleague(s) genuinely suspects that the individual may be misusing drugs or alcohol, colleagues have a responsibility to raise their concerns with the employee's line manager.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 The Council will undertake and regularly review risk assessments to identify and assess the risks associated with alcohol and substance abuse. The risk assessments will consider the scope of all work activities undertaken by the Council (in particular any safety critical operations) to determine the appropriate policies and arrangements for managing the risks associated with alcohol and substance abuse by employees and, where relevant, contractors, customers and the public.
- 4.2 The Council prohibits the drinking of alcohol by employees and contractors in the workplace or on Council business other than reasonable drinking of alcohol in connection with approved social functions. The Council regards drinking to an 'unreasonable level' as any of the following situations:
- The individual is over the legal limit stipulated for driving (i.e. 35mcg/100ml of breath alcohol concentration).
 - If management has reason to believe the individual's performance is impaired. This may be at less than the legal limit stipulated for driving.

- If management has reason to believe the individual's behaviour may cause embarrassment, distress or offence to others or could potentially bring the Council into disrepute.
 - The individual continues to drink when instructed to stop by a manager.
- 4.3 The Council will take all reasonable steps to prevent employees and contractors carrying out work-related activities if they are considered to be unfit/unsafe to undertake the work as a result of alcohol consumption or substance abuse. The Council reserves the right to refuse entry to, or to send home, any employee who is considered to be in an intoxicated condition. Any breaches of this nature will be handled under the Disciplinary Policy.
- 4.4 The Council expressly prohibits the use of any illegal drugs or any prescription drugs that have not been prescribed for the user. It is a criminal offence to be in possession of, use or distribute an illicit substance. If any such incidents take place on Council premises, in Council vehicles or at a Council function, they will be regarded as serious. They will be investigated in accordance with the [Disciplinary Policy](#) and may lead to disciplinary action and possible reporting to the police.
- 4.5 No member of staff or other person working on behalf of the Council's shall, in connection with any work-related activity:
- report, or endeavour to report, for duty (including being on call) having consumed drugs or alcohol likely to render him/her unfit and/or unsafe for work. Intoxicating substances, such as alcohol, may remain in the system for some time and even small amounts can impair performance and jeopardise safety;
 - consume or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on duty unless, in the case of alcohol, with the agreement of line management for the purposes of official entertaining;
 - store drugs or alcohol in personal areas such as lockers and desk drawers (with the exception of non-prescribed drugs such as Paracetamol etc. or drugs which been prescribed to the employee – see 3.6 below); or
 - attempt to sell or give drugs or alcohol to any other employee or other person whilst working for or on behalf of the Council.
- 4.6 Staff must inform their line manager regarding any prescribed and/or non-prescribed medication that may have an effect on their ability to carry out their work safely and must follow any instructions subsequently given. Advice can be sought from the Occupational Health Adviser, through the Human Resources team, about whether any prescribed medication may impact on an employee's ability to carry out their work safely. Employees are not obliged to disclose the actual medical condition being treated nor the medication – simply the impact/side effects.
- 4.7 Any employee suffering from drug or alcohol dependency should declare this to their line manager, or to Human Resources, and the Council will subsequently provide reasonable assistance, treating absences for treatment

and/or rehabilitation as any other sickness absence. Early identification is more likely to lead to successful treatment. Failure to accept help or continue with treatment may render the employee liable to action under the [Disciplinary Policy](#).

- 4.8 Counselling support and support from Occupational Health can be accessed via the Human Resources team. All consultations will be strictly confidential between the employee and Occupational Health/the Counsellor.

5. Further information and advice

- 5.1 Further information, advice and guidance for employees and managers is available through the following web links:

Advice on Alcohol Abuse:

- NHS Choices: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Alcohol-misuse>
- Alcoholics Anonymous: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/
- Alcohol Concern: www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE):
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/alcohol.htm>

Advice on Substance and Drug Misuse:

- NHS Choices: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Drug-misuse>
- Narcotics Anonymous: www.ukna.org
- FRANK: www.talktofrank.com
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE):
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/drugs.htm> In addition, the Sickness Absence Policy contains advice on managing stress which can sometimes be a contributory factor in alcohol and substance misuse.

In addition, the [Managing Sickness Absence Policy](#) contains advice on managing stress which can sometimes be a contributory factor in alcohol and substance misuse.