



Alcohol and Substance Policy

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Approved by	Health & Safety Forum
Date Approved	September 2017
Date for Review	September 2018
Version	2.2
Replaces previous version	2.0 (July 2012) 1.0 (May 2010)

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1.0 Policy Introduction

- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) is committed to providing a safe and effective working environment and to promoting the health, safety and well-being of patients, visitors and employees. The Alcohol and Substance Policy is designed to ensure that employees are aware of the risks associated with alcohol and/or substance misuse and the consequences, including the legal consequences, of their actions.
- Excessive consumption of alcohol and/or substance misuse can impair both mental and physical performance, and may impact on an employee's personal and working life. At work, alcohol and/or substance misuse can result in reduced attendance, sub-standard work performance and increased health and safety risks for the employee and others. (See [Policy Guidance](#) document)
- NHSGGC will provide help and support to any directly employed employee who recognises and accepts that they have an alcohol or substance related problem.
- The Policy aims to set out clear information for managers and employees that explain the duties and responsibilities of all concerned and the procedures to be followed to identify and resolve problems at the earliest opportunity.
- NHSGGC has a legal obligation to protect staff from the potential risks associated with alcohol and drugs under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971). Prosecutions can be brought if the organisation is knowingly allowing their premises to be used for processing, supplying or offering to supply controlled drugs.
- [Guidance on the application of the Policy](#) can be found on HRConnect. The guidance includes information on adverse health effects, promotion of safe and sensible drinking and training for managers.

1.1 Alcohol and Substance Definitions

- NHSGGC defines misuse as any alcohol or substance use, either intermittent or continual, which definitely and repeatedly interferes with a person's health, social functioning and work capability, efficiency, productivity, safety or attendance at work.
- The Policy applies to alcohol, all drugs identified in the Misuse of Drugs Act, prescribed medicines, 'over the counter' medication and other substances which could impair judgement, including psychoactive substances (that is, legal highs, please refer to the [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#)). It is acknowledged that nicotine is also a drug but this will not be addressed by this Policy. (please refer to NHS GGC No Smoking Policy)
- This Policy also recognises the legitimate use of over the counter and prescription medicines which may impair performance. In these circumstances the organisation will work with the employee to ensure safety is maintained during this period.

1.2 Scope

- The Policy applies to all employees of NHSGGC and/or working on NHSGGC sites, including temporary and agency employees, volunteers, all students and those on work experience. It covers measures to be taken in response to situations involving alcohol or substances which have an impact on the workplace. Contractors are obliged to adhere to the rules of this policy detailed in section 1.4.1 (with the exception of testing.)
- This Policy and procedure does not intend to override statutory or national arrangements applying to particular categories of employees, e.g. The NMC Code of Conduct: Professional Standards for Conduct, Performance and Ethics, the General Medical Council and Health Professional Council.

1.3 Aims

The aims of the Policy are:

- To protect the welfare of patients, relatives, visitors and employees from hazards resulting from employees alcohol and substance misuse
- To raise awareness of staff to the risks associated with alcohol and substance misuse and to promote awareness of responsible drinking through appropriate information and through health promotion events and campaigns throughout the organisation
- To create a climate that encourages individuals who suspect or know they have an alcohol or substance misuse problem to seek help at an early stage
- To provide support, encouragement and assistance to employees to access appropriate support for assessment, counselling and other forms of help, when it is known or suspected that the problem is alcohol or substance related
- To ensure that managers, employees, trade union and professional organisation representatives are confident in managing alcohol and substance misuse problems which are impacting on the working environment
- To provide a framework to enable instances of alcohol or substance misuse to be handled in an appropriate, fair and consistent manner
- To achieve a balance between supporting employees who come forward with a problem and the overriding need to preserve health and safety.

1.4 Roles and Responsibilities

1.4.1 All Employees

- All employees have responsibility under the Staff Governance Standard, which are encompassed in the NHS Reform (Scotland) Act 2004 as well as The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to work with NHSGGC to meet its statutory obligation to provide a safe and healthy working environment. This includes the responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others – patients, colleagues and members of the public – who could be affected by their actions. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that:
 - they do not consume alcohol or misuse substances during the course of the

working day;

- they do not consume alcohol or misuse substances when on call or on a break from the workplace with the intention/ possibility of returning to it;
- they do not come to work under the influence of alcohol or substances; (a list of symptoms which may be identified as indicating 'under the influence' are listed in section 2.0 of the associated guidance document.)
- they will take advice from GP/Pharmacist regarding side effects of prescription or over the counter medication in relation to performance at work
- they are aware that they may be required to participate in testing where this is agreed as part of an alcohol or substance misuse recovery programme

Contravention of these rules will be classed as misconduct and as such constitute a breach of this Policy. All breaches, including prosecution will be dealt with in accordance with the NHS GGC Disciplinary Policy and Procedure – Management of Employee Conduct.

Discipline and support for staff can run in tandem. In some cases it may be appropriate to delay disciplinary action pending successful outcome of treatment.

All employees may approach the Occupational Health Service (OHS) at any time and 'self –refer', regarding concerns with alcohol or substance use. All consultations are treated in the strictest confidence. More information on self referral and the [Occupational Health Service](#) is available on HRConnect.

1.4.2 Managers

The manager has prime accountability and responsibility for the management of the employee who has an alcohol or substance misuse problem or who has a performance issue related to alcohol or substance misuse.

The role of managers is to:

- be aware of the signs of alcohol and substance misuse and observe the conduct and behaviours of their employees in the light of this;
- know how to approach employees who may have issues with alcohol or substance misuse and address the issues appropriately with them;
- manage and support the employee through the process of dealing with their treatment for alcohol or substance misuse;
- liaise with OHS and Human Resources (HR) for advice and support;
- maintain the confidentiality of the employee
- implement any advice given by specialist services, if OHS refer the employee for specialist treatment or support;
- ensure that all their employees are aware of the Policy
- discuss with senior management the issue of suspension and removal from the workplace of an employee, if symptoms of drug or alcohol misuse are evident. (Information on symptoms is provided in the [guidance document](#))

- ensure that individuals who are suspended due to symptoms of drug or alcohol misuse, as detailed above, must be advised not to drive home.

Note: There may be some circumstances in which the appropriate manager is not the individual's immediate line manager. Advice should be sought from Human Resources in these circumstances.

1.4.3 Human Resources (HR)

Human Resources provide the employee and manager with expert advice about the application of the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Policies to the specific circumstances, and they facilitate any actions required.

Their role is to:

- ensure that the process the employee is managed through is structured, in line with this Policy and any other related policies, and is understood by all parties;
- provide facilitation for the parties if the issues are difficult to address;
- help the employee, manager, and trade union representative to come to fair decisions about the management of their health and employment;
- if required, advise the manager and the employee of the employment law relating to alcohol and substance misuse in or around the workplace

1.4.4 Occupational Health Service (OHS)

Occupational Health will provide the employee with expert health advice, and provide management and HR with advice on fitness to work and on compliance with support and treatment.

Their role is to:

- provide the employee with advice and support to identify the extent of an alcohol or substance related problem;
- with the consent of employee, carry out a comprehensive medical assessment
- confirm that appropriate support and treatment has been accessed when the assessment is complete
- provide advice to management on the individual's fitness for work;
- provide advice to management that compliance with support/treatment is maintained.

1.4.5 Employee Representatives

The employee representative's role is to advise and support their member and to facilitate outcomes for the employee which are in line with this policy.

Their role is to:

- enable the member of staff to acknowledge their alcohol or substance misuse issues as they relate to their employment, and non work related issues if appropriate;

- work with the employee, manager and HR to ensure that the OHS advice is implemented and is valuable to their member;
- support the employee, manager and HR to come to a decision about the management of their health and employment
- ensure that their member understands the potential consequences of non - compliance with an agreed programme of treatment and care
- support the employee through any investigations, hearings etc. in line with the Management of Conduct Policy.

1.4.6 Additional Guidance

[Guidance notes](#) are available to support the application of this Policy and can be found on HRConnect.

1.5 Use of Alcohol / Substances During and Around the Working Day

It is NHSGGC policy that employees are not permitted to consume alcohol or substances whilst on duty or on call. Employees are not permitted to come on duty or be on call under the influence of alcohol or substances.

This means that, in addition to not consuming alcohol or substances during the working day and during breaks, employees must not consume alcohol or substances during a timeframe within which the use of alcohol or substances could affect them or others in their workplace. With regard to prescription or over-the-counter medication, this is permitted, and reference should be made to sections 1.4.1 and 1.5.8 for further guidance on this matter.

1.5.1 Employees on NHS premises

Employees are not permitted to consume alcohol on NHSGGC premises. Social events for staff on NHS premises must not have alcohol available.

1.5.2 Events involving patients

It is accepted that social events with patients can be important to enhance the therapeutic culture in which patients in areas of long stay care are involved. If alcohol is to be available, then such events must be properly planned/risk assessed and effectively supervised with the prior consent of a senior manager. Employees must not consume alcohol provided at such events.

1.5.3 Attending events off site in an organisational capacity

It is the policy of NHSGGC that employees are not permitted to consume alcohol whilst on duty, nor to come on duty under the influence of alcohol. When employees are on call and may therefore come back on duty they are considered to be on duty and consequently not permitted to consume alcohol.

Employees attending conferences/external events during working hours are considered to be at work and are therefore not permitted to consume alcohol. For events outwith normal working hours eg evenings, employees must be aware that they may only consume alcohol if there is no risk of them attending the workplace and they are attending the event in their own time.

1.5.4 Sale of alcohol on NHS premises

The sale of alcohol on NHSGGC premises and in retail premises on NHSGGC property is not permitted.

1.5.5 Social events organised through the workplace

Employees should be aware that they are expected to behave sensibly and reasonably at such events, which may include retiral and Christmas parties. The Management of Employee Conduct Policy may apply.

Possession on Site

1.5.6 Alcohol

Employees are strictly prohibited from having an open or partially used container of alcohol within the workplace. This is a matter of safety for patients and other employees, and to ensure that the individual does not inadvertently find themselves in a position which might be misconstrued.

1.5.7 Illegal drugs

Employees are not permitted to have in their possession within the workplace or store within the workplace (unless they are required to handle or store them in pursuance of their duties) illegal drugs for which they could be liable to criminal prosecution. In the event that any employee is found to be in possession of such drugs on NHSGGC premises, NHSGGC will link with the organisation fraud liaison officer who may inform Police Scotland and will co-operate in any investigation they undertake. In addition the incident will be investigated under the auspices of the NHSGGC Disciplinary Policy and Procedure – Management of Employee Conduct. As a consequence of any finding of such misconduct employees may have their registration / professional body notified.

1.5.8 Over the counter medication and prescription drugs

Employees who believe their ability to work is being affected by their medication should self-refer to Occupational Health. Where a manager has concerns regarding an employee's ability to work where it may be tied to medication they should discuss this with the employee and, a managerial referral made to Occupational Health where appropriate.

1.6 Monitoring and Review of Policy

This Policy will be monitored to ensure its effectiveness and reviewed by the NHSGGC Health and Safety Forum every two years.

Arrangements will include:

- the collection and monitoring of quarterly anonymised statistical data on the number of employees by employee group, work department and age who are being managed under the terms of this Policy;
- the collection and monitoring of quarterly anonymised statistical data on the number of employees who are being managed under the terms of other NHSGGC policies as a result of alcohol or substance misuse problems;
- reported incidents due to employees with alcohol or substance misuse problems by the Health and Safety/Risk Management teams.

End of Policy.