

WEST GLOUCESTERSHIRE PRIMARY CARE TRUST

This document supports the Trust Health and Safety Policy as it applies to

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AT WORK.

Details of the arrangements for implementation are set out in the Health and Safety Policy.

General Statement

The Trust is concerned to provide a safe and healthy working environment. It recognises that this can be put at risk by those who **misuse** alcohol, drugs or any other substance to such an extent that it may affect their health, performance, conduct and relationships at work. This protocol, supporting the Trust Health and Safety Policy, aims to:

- promote the health and well-being of employees and to minimise problems at work arising from the effects of alcohol, drugs or any other substance
- identify employees with possible problems relating to the effects of alcohol, drugs or any other substance at an early stage
- offer employees known to have alcohol or drug-related problems affecting their work referral to an appropriate source for diagnosis and treatment if necessary.

This protocol does not apply to an employee who commits a clear breach of Trust rules due to overindulgence of alcohol or substance abuse on one or more occasions. In these cases, action will be taken under the disciplinary procedure as appropriate.

The Health and Safety Policy and this supporting protocol applies to all employees of the Trust.

The person with overall responsibility for health and safety is the Chief Executive. General Managers and Control Book Holders are responsible for implementation of this supporting protocol within their units and areas of responsibility

Arrangements for Securing the Health and Safety of Workers

The Trust will, in consultation with workers and their representatives:

- advise all existing employees and all persons starting work of the risks to health arising from the effects of alcohol, drugs or any other substance (including some legitimately prescribed medications)
- encourage employees, who may have alcohol or drug-related problems which affect their work, to take advantage of the Trust Occupational Health Service self referral procedure for diagnosis and treatment
- enable managers to identify job performance problems that may be attributable to the effects of alcohol, drugs or any other substance and to consult with a Trust Personnel Adviser to determine whether there is sufficient concern to warrant a medical evaluation

- in cases where the effects on work of misuse of alcohol, drugs or any other substance is confirmed or admitted, agree upon a programme of treatment in consultation with the Trust Occupational Health advisor and the employee

The Trust Occupational Health Service:

- Will co-ordinate, monitor and if necessary participate in the management of individuals
- Liaise with the general practitioner (GP), counsellor, hospital outpatient department or in-patient care

Referrals

- Voluntary referrals – employees who suspect or know that they have an alcohol related problem are encouraged to seek help through their Manager or Personnel Adviser, the Occupational Health Department, their General Practitioner, or any other agency
- Management referrals – where it has become apparent or is suspected that an employee may have an alcohol related problem he or she will be referred by a Manager or Personnel Adviser to the Occupational Health Department

Referrals Related to Disciplinary Action

- It is recognised that employees with alcohol related problems may be identified as a result of disciplinary action when an employee may raise the problems as a 'mitigating factor'. Each case will be decided on its merits

Following disciplinary action, unless the employee has been dismissed, he or she will be referred to the Occupational Health Department. Where an employee has been dismissed, efforts should still be made to provide advice and help.

- Absence from duty for assessment or treatment will be treated as sick leave. The provisions of the appropriate Whitley Council will apply.

Rehabilitation

- The employee will continue in the same post or return to the same post after treatment, unless:
 - To do so could prejudice complete and satisfactory recovery
 - The effect of the problem before treatment has affected the individual's ability to such an extent that to continue in, or return to, the same post would be impossible or unsafe.
 - Where because of organisational needs the post no longer exists or has had to be filled
 - If it proves impossible for an employee to return to the same post after treatment, the Trust will make every effort to offer an alternative post and allow the employee to be considered for other vacancies.

- Following return to work after or during treatment, should work performance, conduct or attendance again deteriorate, each case will be considered on its merits and a further opportunity to accept and co-operate with the help and treatment will be offered.
- It is recognised that in certain cases where, for example, the employee has incurred severe health disabilities as a result of alcohol abuse, the Trust may be prepared to support an application for retirement on ill-health grounds
- It is recognised that there may be occasions when colleagues will be placed under stress during a course of treatment or rehabilitation of a fellow employee whether he remains at work or not. Appropriate measures will be taken to safeguard the interest of such employees.
- The decision to accept and co-operate with treatment is the responsibility of the individual employee, but the individual also remains responsible for his or her performance, conduct and attendance at work

The Trust has an established policy and procedures for supporting staff with ill health. These procedures will be followed for an employee who is found to have misused alcohol, drugs or any other substance admits to the same. The policy covers:

- management action for refusal to accept help
- conditions for accepting treatment
- future employment if treatment proves to be successful
- observation of medical confidentiality
- effects upon pensions, benefits and employment rights.

Information and Training

The Trust will provide sufficient information, instruction and training as is necessary to ensure that all employees have the knowledge required:

- to understand the length of time alcohol and drugs effect the body
- to understand the dangers associated with the effects of alcohol, drugs or any other substance at work and the Trust policy regarding this
- to understand the Trust procedures that will be adopted where there is found to be a deterioration in work performance from these effects
- to understand the legal consequences of their actions.

Managers and supervisors will be given additional training, as necessary, to enable them to deal with any physiological problems that may arise as a result of the effects of alcohol, drugs or any other substance upon work performance.

Safe System of Work

The effects of abuse of alcohol, drugs or any other substance at work can create serious health and safety risks. Therefore, the following rules should be adhered to.

1. Do not come to work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any other substance.

2. Do not drink any alcohol or take recreational drugs during your working hours
3. Allow sufficient time to elapse for the effects of alcohol drugs or to leave the body before reporting for work
4. Do not bring alcohol or recreational drugs on to Trust premises.
5. Check with your doctor or pharmacist about the side-effects of prescribed and non prescribed medications.
6. Some simple 'over the counter' non prescription remedies used to treat symptoms of minor illnesses such as colds and hay fever can cause drowsiness - always read the information included in the packaging and follow the manufacturers instructions.
7. When working in patient/public areas keep personal medicines securely locked away.
8. Never drive or operate machinery if you are affected by alcohol, drugs or any other substance.
9. Ask your general practitioner or the Trust Occupational Health Service for guidance and advice on sensible limits of alcohol consumption.
10. Offer support and advice to colleagues who you suspect of suffering from alcohol or drug abuse: do not "protect" them by keeping silent.
11. Ask for assistance from the Staff Support Service if you feel that matters are beyond your own control.

Summary Protocol Statement

The use of alcohol is not appropriate in the workplace and drug abuse can be a criminal offence as well as a serious risk to health and safety.

The three most important steps are to:

- look after your own health and safety by developing a responsible attitude towards alcohol and drugs
- be aware of colleagues or others who may put safety at risk by their actions
- recognise when and how to ask for help.

Review

This document will be subject to review every 12 months, or if circumstances indicate it may no longer be valid.

The document will be amended in the light of review.

Date: April 2003