

Alcohol & Drug Policy

Policy · UK · Updated 2026-07-23 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

An alcohol and drug policy sets out your organisation's rules on alcohol, illegal drugs, and impairing medication at work — what is banned, what must be disclosed, how someone struggling can get help, and what happens when the rules are broken. It separates two things that are often confused: supporting a health problem and dealing with a conduct problem.

Most managers meet this issue rarely and handle it under pressure: the smell of alcohol on a shift worker, a prescription causing drowsiness around machinery. A policy written in calm conditions is what stops those moments becoming unsafe, unfair, or both.

This template includes clear rules, medication disclosure, a confidential support route, an optional testing section, and the interface with your disciplinary policy.

Purpose and scope

This policy sets the rules on alcohol, drugs, and impairing medication for everyone working for or on behalf of [Your company], including contractors and agency staff — on our premises, at client sites, when driving on business, and at work-organised events.

It exists to keep people safe, to treat dependency as a health issue wherever possible, and to make the conduct rules clear enough to enforce fairly.

Policy statement

Nobody may work for [Your company] while impaired by alcohol or drugs. Nobody may drink alcohol during working hours outside authorised events, or bring illegal drugs onto our premises. We will support anyone who tells us they have a dependency problem and seeks help; we will use the disciplinary policy when the rules are broken.

Definitions

- Impaired: not fit to perform your role safely and competently, whatever the substance or amount involved.
- Working hours: any time you are working, on call, or driving on business, including paid breaks — not only time on site.
- Safety-critical work: [list roles — e.g. driving, operating machinery, working at height, caring for vulnerable people] where impairment could injure someone.
- Authorised events: occasions where [senior role] has approved moderate alcohol, such as [examples].

Responsibilities

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Policy owner ([name/role]): keeps this policy current and decides, with advice, how borderline cases are handled.

- Managers: act immediately on signs of impairment — never let someone work it off — and record what they observed at the time.
- All staff: come to work fit, disclose impairing medication, and raise concerns about a colleague rather than covering for them.

The rules

- Do not work, drive on business, or attend client sites while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Do not drink alcohol during working hours except at authorised events — and never before safety-critical work, including returning to it later the same day.
- Do not possess, use, or supply illegal drugs on [Your company] premises or in company vehicles at any time.
- If prescribed or over-the-counter medication may cause drowsiness or affect your work, tell [manager/named role] before starting work. We will adjust duties where needed — disclosure is never punished.
- If a manager judges someone unfit to work, they will be sent home safely — by [taxi/arranged transport], never driving themselves — and the matter reviewed on the next working day.

Support and self-referral

Anyone who tells us they have a problem with alcohol or drugs before it surfaces through an incident or investigation will be supported: a confidential conversation with [named role], adjusted duties where appropriate, time off for treatment handled under our absence arrangements, and the situation kept to those who need to know.

Coming forward is not a free pass for conduct that has already endangered someone, but it always counts in a person's favour and shifts the emphasis from discipline to recovery.

Testing (delete this section if you do not test)

Where testing operates, it is limited to [circumstances — e.g. safety-critical roles, post-incident, reasonable suspicion], carried out by [accredited provider], with the individual's consent, and with results handled confidentially under our data protection policy. Refusing a test without good reason is itself treated as a disciplinary matter. Take advice and check current HSE guidance before introducing any testing programme.

Breaches, records and review

Breaches are handled under the disciplinary policy. Working while impaired in a safety-critical role, or possessing or supplying illegal drugs at work, will normally be treated as gross misconduct. Where dependency emerges during the process, we will pause and consider support before deciding the outcome.

Records of incidents, referrals, and any test results are held confidentially in [system/location], with access limited to [roles]. This policy is reviewed [frequency] and after any incident involving impairment. Owner: [name/role]. Next review: [date].

How to use this template

1. List your genuinely safety-critical roles first — the stricter rules in the policy hang off that list.
2. Decide your position on alcohol at work events and state it; the annual party is where vague policies fail.
3. Set up the confidential support route before publishing — a named person, briefed, not just a department.
4. Delete the testing section unless you will actually test, and take advice before introducing testing.
5. Brief managers on the send-home procedure, including how the person gets home — an impaired employee driving home is your risk too.
6. Cover the policy at induction and again before [seasonal events or peak periods].

Official guidance

- › [HSE — Alcohol and drugs at work](#)
- › [ACAS — Absence from work](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/alcohol-drug-policy> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.