

FACT SHEET 1

Wirral Drugs in the Workplace Initiative

Counting the cost of drugs and alcohol misuse to your workplace

Every company would like to think it is not affected by drugs or alcohol misuse – however research suggests it is a problem most businesses, regardless of their size, will encounter.

Why be concerned?

- 18% of the businesses surveyed in 1998 reported illegal drug taking among employees in the previous year (Institute of Personnel Development Substance Survey 1998).
- Around a quarter of the people seeking help with drug problems are in work (Health and Safety Monitor 1992).
- 1 in 4 accidents in the workplace are drug or alcohol related (International Labour Office 1987).

Both employers and employees may be affected by the actions of workers who are misusing drugs.

- ✘ **Sickness Absence:** employees who misuse drugs take three times more sick benefits than others. (Jackson, Drug and Alcohol Policies, 1999)
- ✘ **Getting on with colleagues:** employees misusing drugs may be tired during the working week. If workmates feel they are not pulling their weight, relationships at work can deteriorate.
- ✘ **Injuries at work:** drug misusers are 3.5 times more likely to injure themselves or someone else. (Jackson, Drug and Alcohol Policies 1999)
- ✘ **Simply doing the job:** employees who use drugs are one third less productive, as drugs and alcohol affect concentration and cause memory loss. (US National Institute for Drug Abuse)
- ✘ **Crime:** an employee with an expensive drug or alcohol problem may need to pilfer or steal from work or even become involved in fraud or embezzlement to finance their misuse.

Looking After Everyone's Needs

An employee with a substance misuse problem should be treated as if they have a health problem rather than as an immediate case for disciplinary action or dismissal. Disciplinary action may eventually be necessary but should not be regarded as a first resort. Time off for treatment should be handled in exactly the same way as other leave is handled through attendance management procedures. (Drink, Drugs and Work Don't Mix, Alcohol Concern and The Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence, 1999)

Everyone benefits from a planned and well-implemented substance misuse policy, where rehabilitation and confidentiality feature alongside rules and responsibilities. This is good practice and in the event of an incident will benefit employers and employees alike.

Refer to the fourth in our series of fact sheets, 'Where to find help', for details of available resources, advice and information about drugs.

Wirral Drugs at Work programme is funded through the Communities Against Drugs initiative – a partnership between Wirral (DAAT) Drug and Alcohol Action Team and Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. It aims to:

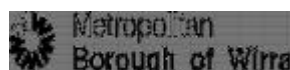
- reduce drug related crime and disorder
- strengthen community partnership
- disrupt drug markets.

National helplines and websites

FRANK is a national helpline that offers free confidential advice and information about drugs 24 hours a day. Contact FRANK online at www.talktofrank.com or call 0800 77 66 00.

Drinkline provides free and confidential advice on any aspect of drinking. Tel: 0800 917 8282 (Tuesday to Thursday 9.00 am to 11.00 pm, Friday to Monday 24 hours)

Release is a confidential help line offering advice on drug use and legal issues. Tel: 020 7729 9904 Monday to Friday from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm or www.release.org.uk



The Health and Safety Executive website offers advice on policy development and legal issues etc. www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/index.htm

DrugScope aims to advise on policy development and reduce drug related risk. Tel: 020 7928 1211 or visit www.drugscope.org.uk

The **ACAS** advisory booklet **Health and Employment** provides information on handling drug related problems in the workplace. Call ACAS Publications on 0870 242 90 90 or view online at www.acas.org.uk