

FACT SHEET 2

Wirral Drugs in the Workplace Initiative

Recognising The Signs and Symptoms of Drug Misuse

Drugs services agree that many working people who come forward for treatment for drug misuse are using stimulants such as ecstasy and cocaine, often combined with alcohol or other drugs.

The after effects of weekend use can last well into the working week. This affects work performance as well as having detrimental psychological and social effects.

What should you look for?

It is often difficult to be sure that changes in a person's behaviour are because of drug or alcohol misuse, some of the signs may include:

- ✗ poor timekeeping
- ✗ frequent absence from work (especially after a weekend)
- ✗ fatigue and depression (towards midweek)
- ✗ deterioration in relationships with colleagues
- ✗ inappropriate behaviour
- ✗ financial irregularities
- ✗ reduced productivity.

Remember though – if someone shows these behaviours, they are not necessarily caused by drug or alcohol misuse. Other factors may contribute, so don't make assumptions.

(Source: Tackling Alcohol and Drugs In The Workplace: City of London Drug Action Team)

What are the drugs and their effects?

Ecstasy (E, doves, echoes) – regular use can lead to sleep and eating problems and leave people feeling very lethargic and low. Long term or heavy use may cause paranoia or anxiousness.

Cannabis (weed, hash, spliff) – impairs co-ordination and the ability to concentrate and can leave people tired and lacking energy. Impairs driving skills. Long term or heavy use can make people paranoid and anxious.

Amphetamines (speed, whiz, uppers, billy) – amphetamines affect short-term memory and concentration and the comedown causes tiredness and depression, often for days.

Anabolic Steroids ('roids) – build up muscles. Are often used to increase the ability to train and to speed up recovery from strenuous exercise. Misuse increases the chance of liver failure and heart attack.

Cocaine (coke, Charlie, snow, C) – is a powerful stimulant, which makes users feel confident and alert. But misuse can leave users restless, confused, exhausted and paranoid. Because the effects are short lived, users can want more and more.

Crack (stones, rocks, wash) – a concentrated form of cocaine which is highly addictive. As well as leaving users confused, exhausted and paranoid, smoking crack can also cause breathing problems and pains in the chest.

Heroin (smack, gear, jack, scag) – initially produces an effect of well-being and contentment. Although long term heroin users need the drug to feel they are functioning normally, it can make them feel sick, constipated, sleepy and confused.

Tranquillisers – known by their chemical names (diazepam, temazepam) or by their trade names (valium, ativan, mogadon) – prescribed by doctors as a short term treatment for anxiety, depression and sleep problems. Act to calm users but high doses can slow down reactions causing accidents more likely.

(Source: FRANK Factsheets; The Score: Facts About Drugs - DOH Publications)

Where to Go for Help

If you think someone you know has a drug problem and you want to know more or find out how to help, refer to the fourth in our series of fact sheets, 'Where to find help'.

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