



**Workforce**

**Alcohol and Other Substances  
Policy: guide for employees**

This guide will help you understand the Alcohol and Other Substances Policy and how it is applied.

The following guide forms part of the standard for workforce policies. These policies apply to all eligible staff within NHS Scotland, regardless of the board they are employed by. The guide covers:

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# What is the purpose of the Alcohol and Other Substances Policy?

This policy aims to:

- raise awareness of alcohol and substance use
- support employees with experience of problematic alcohol or substance use
- create a culture where you feel confident asking for help
- create a safe working environment for all staff and service users.

## Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all employees and workers, including those on bank, agency, or sessional contracts. In this guide, 'employee' includes all these groups.

## Employee responsibilities

As an employee, you should:

- Not consume alcohol or other substances before or during your shift, including breaks. This also applies if you are required to attend work at short notice or if you are on call.
- Make sure enough time has passed for any substances to leave your system before you start work.
- Tell your manager immediately if you are prescribed or plan to take any medication that could affect your ability to work safely.
- Speak to your manager in confidence if you are concerned about your alcohol or substance use.
- Inform your manager if you are concerned about a colleague who may be misusing substances.
- Familiarise yourself with this policy and procedures.

## Identification

If your manager suspects you have a problem with alcohol or other substances, they will meet with you to discuss the support available. They may seek advice from HR or refer you to occupational health for more guidance.

Signs that might lead to a supportive discussion with your manager include:

- multiple unauthorised absences
- frequent sick leave
- often being late or leaving early
- appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or other substances
- smelling of alcohol
- physical signs like hand tremors or sweating
- a decline in personal appearance
- frequent accidents
- difficulty recalling instructions or handling complex tasks
- changes in mood or behaviour

Your manager will be aware that other issues can cause some of these signs. The discussion is a chance for you to share any concerns and for you to work together to find support.

## **Initial actions**

If your manager suspects you have come to work under the influence of alcohol or other substances, they will meet with you to discuss their concerns.

You may be sent home for your safety and the safety of others. Your manager may arrange a taxi or, with your agreement, contact a relative to collect you.

Driving under the influence is a criminal offence. If your manager suspects you are under the influence, they are expected to take reasonable steps to stop you from driving. If you insist on driving, your manager must report this to the police.

Your manager will then arrange to meet with you on your next working day to discuss what happened and agree on the next steps.

## **Following Identification of a problem**

If it's clear you need support with alcohol or other substances, your manager will meet with you to discuss concerns and agree on the next steps.

Your manager will work with you to complete an Agreement Template. This template will outline the support you will receive and the actions you will take.

[Download Alcohol and Other Substances Policy : supportive plan form.](#)

Your manager will take a supportive approach, and you are expected to engage with the support offered. If you do not engage with the agreed plan, the situation may be managed through another relevant NHS Scotland policy.

You will be offered a referral to occupational health for advice and guidance. If you decline this referral or do not engage with occupational health, your manager will make decisions based on the information available to them.

## Leave

You may be able to get time off to attend appointments, in line with the Special Leave Policy.

[Find out more about requesting special leave.](#)

If you are unfit for work, your absence will be managed under the Attendance Policy. However, you will continue to receive support from this policy.

[View the Attendance Policy.](#)

## Useful links

- [NHS Inform - Healthy Living](#)
- [Substance use - supporting employees with lived and living experience: guiding principles](#)
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- [Drink Aware](#)
- [FRANK – Honest Information about Drugs](#)