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Imperial College Healthcare
NHS Trust

Trust-Wide Policy	
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Staff Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Purpose and scope.....	2
3. Our commitments.....	3
4. Our responsibilities.....	3
5. Misuse at work.....	4
6. Support.....	4
7. Policy breaches.....	5
8. Professionally registered colleagues.....	5
9. Implementation & dissemination.....	6
10. Monitoring arrangements.....	6
11. Supporting information.....	6

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1. Introduction

1.1 We at Imperial College Healthcare Trust are committed to providing a safe and productive workplace to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of our people and to provide a safe environment for our patients.

1.2 Alcohol, drug or substance misuse is a health and safety risk, not just to the individual, but to others around them too – particularly patients and other colleagues. Misuse can also affect conduct, performance and attendance.

1.3 It is recognised that there may be times where we have problems with the use of alcohol, drugs or other substances that we need help from others to resolve. Anyone can be affected by this, and our aim is to work with colleagues who are struggling to get them the support they need.

1.4 This policy aims to:

- Ensure we all fulfil our responsibility to maintain a safe working environment; and to maintain our reputation and the delivery of quality, effective services for patients.
- Promote awareness and understanding of the effects of alcohol and drug related problems and the risks and potential harm to health associated with the use of intoxicating substances.
- Create a climate that encourages employees experiencing alcohol, drug or substance misuse problems to come forward for help knowing that they will receive support.
- Give managers a framework to deal with alcohol and substance misuse issues constructively in a fair and consistent manner.
- Reduce absence levels, enhance productivity and retain talent.
- Strike a balance between supporting employees with misuse/ dependency problems and maintaining the health, safety and welfare of other colleagues, patients and others.

2. Purpose & scope

2.1 This policy covers the misuse of intoxicating substances in the workplace and any other context which may place the health of employees at risk and affect their ability to perform their duties.

2.2 Intoxicating substances are things that change the way the user feels mentally or physically. They include alcohol, illegal drugs, legal drugs, prescription medicines (for example tranquillisers, anti-depressants, and over-the-counter medicines), solvents, glue, and lighter fuel.

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2.3 This policy is for all our employees including agency staff, contractors, honorary staff, volunteers and others working on our behalf.

3. Our commitments

3.1 We are committed to developing and promoting a culture of dignity and respect, within which our values are firmly embedded.

3.2 We want to support employees who may be experiencing problems with alcohol and substance misuse. When these problems arise, we'll act reasonably and take a non-judgemental approach.

3.3 We encourage anyone who is worried about their relationship with alcohol and/ or other substances to ask for help and support so that we can work with you and help you to address the problem.

3.4 We will offer advice, refer employees for Occupational Health assistance and support employees who are receiving treatment.

4. Our responsibilities

4.1 Our managers need to:

- Be approachable and create and provide a supportive environment where employees feel able to discuss an alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem with their management.
- Encourage employees to speak up if they are worried about their relationship with alcohol and/ or other substances.
- Listen to and address any issues or concerns raised and refer to Occupational Health for advice and support.
- Treat employees who seek help for issues with alcohol and/ or substance misuse with kindness and empathy, encouraging them to voluntarily seek help.
- Support the employee's rehabilitation by offering advice and support to enable their recovery.
- Identify factors that could indicate employees have an alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem, such as absenteeism, poor performance, unreliability, impaired memory and concentration, and talk to employees if they think there might be a potential issue.
- Be aware that an employee appearing under the influence of alcohol, drug or substance misuse may have other ill health issues that need to be addressed.

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4.2 We all need to:

- Take care of our own health and safety, and the health and safety of others around us.
- Familiarise ourselves with the contents of this policy and the support that is available.
- Make sure we're unimpaired by the effects of alcohol or any other substance when we're at work.
- Seek help if we have concerns about our alcohol, drug or substance misuse by speaking to our line manager, Occupational Health, a colleague from the People & OD team, the CONTACT service or a trade union representative.
- Be open and honest about our current circumstances, where issues are identified.
- Co-operate with any support and assistance provided to address an alcohol drug or substance misuse problem.
- Check whether any prescribed drug(s) we are taking may affect our performance, conduct and or attendance, and talk to our line manager if we have any concerns about this.
- Encourage and support other colleagues to seek help if we think or know they have a problem with alcohol or other substances.
- Raise concerns to management if we are concerned about the health and safety of any colleague.

5. Misuse at work

5.1 Where we think that an employee is under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances at work, we'll talk to the individual to try to find out what's going on.

5.2 If there's any risk to health and safety and/ or we believe an employee may be unfit for work, we'll need to take appropriate action. This may include:

- Put arrangements in place to ensure the employee gets home safely
- Referral to Occupational Health
- Temporary restriction on duties
- Suspension - this will only be a decision we take if genuine risks have been identified and we've ruled out all other viable options – details of how to suspend an employee can be found in our Disciplinary Policy

5.3 If the colleague is a doctor, the matter will be escalated to the Medical Director's Office (MDO) to decide whether restrictions and/ or a formal process may be needed.

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6. Support

6.1 If you are experiencing problems with alcohol, drugs or substance misuse, we understand that it can be very difficult to talk about this. However, we can help you to take that first step to addressing these issues.

6.2 We encourage individuals to discuss their problems at an early stage with their GP, Occupational Health and their line manager to get the support needed as soon as possible.

6.3 We recognise alcohol, drug or substance dependency is a health issue that requires special treatment and help.

6.4 With the employee's consent, a referral to Occupational Health will be made for specific advice on the support that is available and can be provided.

7. Policy breaches

7.1 The nature of our work means that we must take all reasonable steps to minimise the risk of accidents and to protect patients and colleagues.

7.2 If an employee is unable to acknowledge that they have an alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem and/ or do not engage with us to address this, we may need to handle this as a conduct issue under our Disciplinary Policy.

7.3 Other circumstances related to alcohol, drugs and other substances - whether dependency-related or not – may also need to be treated as a disciplinary matter. Examples are:

- Arriving at work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances, or becoming impaired by alcohol, drugs or other substances during the working day (including rest breaks).
- Being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances when required to attend work at short notice (such as on-call).
- Possessing, dealing, trafficking, selling, storing or taking drugs, either at work or outside of work.
- Behaviour that can (or does) cause significant reputational damage to us (whether inside or outside of work).

7.4 If we have a reasonable suspicion of illegal activity associated with drug use at work, we may need to take the decision to inform the police too.

8. Professionally registered colleagues

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8.1 Where issues are identified around misuse or dependency and the colleague is registered with a professional body, such as a nurse or midwife, we might need to tell the professional body what's going on. The most senior professional lead in the directorate should take the decision if and when to refer, if this is needed. Please see the Professional Registration Policy and Procedure for more guidance.

8.2 Referrals to the GMC are done by the Medical Director's Office (MDO) after discussion with local teams; concerns around misuse or dependency should be escalated to the MDO.

9. Implementation and dissemination

9.1 We've made tonal and style changes to this policy from the previous one, so we'll ensure divisional People & OD colleagues cascade these nuances to our approach in briefings to divisional management. We'll upload the policy on our intranet once approved.

10. Monitoring Arrangements

10.1 On a quarterly basis, we'll monitor:

- The incidences of sickness absence related to alcohol and/ or substance misuse; and
- The number of formal disciplinary processes related to alcohol and/ or substance misuse.

10.2 We'll use this data to ensure consistency of approach, and to identify any particular areas with a higher than usual prevalence that might benefit from a more in-depth, holistic review of what's happening.

11. Supporting Information

Current Document Information	
Document Lead:	Fiona Percival, Divisional Director of People & OD
Responsible Executive Director:	Kevin Croft, Chief People Officer
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