

SANDWELL COLLEGE  
**SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY**

(Misuse of Alcohol, Drugs and Other Substances)

**1.0 Introduction**

Sandwell College is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its staff, learners and visitors at all times and recognises the risks which may be caused by the misuse of alcohol, drugs or other substances.

It is recognised that alcohol, drugs and other substances cause different problems, but as the issues overlap this Policy will deal with them all collectively.

The Policy takes account of relevant legislation regarding employment law and disability discrimination and the guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

The Policy covers the habitual or frequent consumption of alcohol and alcohol dependency, the inappropriate, illegal or excessive use of drugs or other substances (whether medically or non-medically prescribed), and the effects of such use, possession and /or dependency.

The Policy is designed to be used in conjunction with other College policies such as Poor Performance and the Disciplinary procedures.

The College recognises its responsibility under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to prevent illegal drugs being used or distributed on its premises.

**2.0 Aim**

- 2.1 To ensure the safety of College staff, learners and visitors
- 2.2 To promote the recognition that the misuse of alcohol and /or drugs/other substances are medical and social problems
- 2.3 To facilitate the early identification of such problems encouraging individuals to seek advice, help and assistance voluntarily via agencies such as their General Practitioner, the Occupational Health and Safety Unit, the College Counselling service (as appropriate for staff and learners), and such agencies as Alcoholics Anonymous or Aquarius, before their work performance or studies are affected.
- 2.4 To prevent or reduce substance misuse amongst staff and learners through education, training and the provision of health promotion material through, in particular, the Occupational Health and Safety Unit, Personal Tutors and the Students' Union, whilst recognising the responsibility of all staff.
- 2.5 To establish acceptable and measurable organisational standards for the College on the consumption of alcohol and/or the taking of medically or non-medically prescribed drugs.

**3.0 Objectives**

- 3.1 To provide a framework to enable managers and staff to deal effectively with substance misuse issues.
- 3.2 To ensure consistency of approach across the College
- 3.3 To assist managers and tutorial staff in the identification and management of potential substance misuse problems, including guidance as to the appropriate policies/ procedures to follow.

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### 4.0 Definitions

MISUSE OF ALCOHOL	Any drinking, either intermittent or continual, which interferes with the staff or learners health and /or work performance/ learning so that safety, conduct, productivity or attendance is affected.
MISUSE OF DRUGS	The use of illegal drugs, solvents or other substances and the inappropriate taking of prescribed or over the counter medicines.
INAPPROPRIATE DRINKING	Indulgence in alcohol on random occasions which may lead to staff or learners behaving in a manner contrary to standards of safety, conduct or performance required by the College and which should be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure

### 5.0 Organisational Standards of Behaviour

- 5.1 All staff and learners have a duty of care to themselves and any others who may be affected by their actions or behaviour. Staff should inform their manager and learners their course tutor or personal tutor in confidence if they are aware of any individual at College whose use of alcohol or drugs/other substances could pose a health and safety risk or if they themselves have a substance misuse problem.
- 5.2 All staff and learners have a duty to refrain from behaviour, which could undermine the Colleges public image.
- 5.3 Any information provided by or about a member of staff or learner who may have a substance misuse problem will be treated in the strictest confidence, subject to any legal obligations on the College not to conceal criminal activity or serious health and safety risks to other staff, learners or visitors.
- 5.4 Reporting for work or study potentially unfit due to alcohol, drugs and /or other substances will be regarded as an issue of potential gross misconduct. The prior notification of a substance misuse problem may be taken into consideration, but will not preclude action being taken in accordance with the College's Disciplinary Policy.
- 5.5 Staff and learners should ascertain whether any medicines they are taking either prescribed or purchased over the counter, are likely to produce any side effects which may affect their work/study performance and should inform their line manager/course tutor accordingly.
- 5.6 Alcohol or drugs which could impair professional judgements, performance or conduct and/or pose a health and safety risk must not be consumed prior to or during College hours. Similarly drinking whilst not in College hours but when due to return to work / study is strongly discouraged and staff and learners are required to take responsibility for their actions in this respect.
- 5.7 The consumption of alcohol will not be permitted on any of the College premises, (with the exception of licensed facilities / or with the expressed permission of the Principal). This equally applies to vehicles used in conjunction with college activities.
- 5.8 The College reserves the right to suspend any member of staff / learner from work/study pending further investigation, if they are suspected of being unfit for work/study because of alcohol, drugs and /or other substances. Any such action would be taken in accordance with the College's Disciplinary Policy.

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### 6.0 Recognising Substance Misuse

Substance misuse may be the cause or the symptom of a variety of problems at work/study. Early identification of a problem is more likely to increase the chance of success of any subsequent assistance programme. Managers staff should therefore be aware of and monitor the following behavioural and performance indicators, which may suggest a potential problem.

- Absenteeism especially frequent/increased amounts of sick leave, recurrent illness, unauthorised absences, absences on certain days (e.g. around weekends/ pay day), poor timekeeping, longer breaks and/or absences from duty/class whilst at College.
- Incidents/ accidents particularly an increasing or high level of incidents / accidents.
- Low/ deteriorating performance standards, including missed deadlines, lack of concentration, slow working, poor judgement, lack of attention to detail, increased complaints, unreliability, forgetfulness.
- Interpersonal problems, such as reacting unpredictably to criticism and/ or problems, irritability, borrowing money, physical/verbal abuse of others.
- Appearance such as the smell of alcohol/ solvents/ other substances, shaking. Flushed face. Runny nose, dilated/ constricted pupils, poor personal hygiene.

N.B. This list is not exhaustive and it should be noted that some of the above indicators could result from problems other than substance misuse.

### 7.0 Managing Substance Misuse

- 7.1 Substance misuse can lead to a number of health problems, including addiction or other health/ behavioural disorders, which may be amenable to treatment. Problems may become apparent as a result of an individual choosing to seek help on a voluntary basis or by managers, tutors, colleagues or others noticing behaviour, which indicates a potential problem.
- 7.2 Once a possible case of substance misuse is identified the appropriate line manager / member of staff should arrange to interview the individual concerned as soon as possible to discuss their concerns, or those raised by others. Given the sensitivity of such issues advice should be sought from the Occupational Health and Safety Unit or Personnel on their approach.
- 7.3 Where a substance misuse problem is confirmed or suspected the member of staff or learner should be encouraged to seek confidential help and support via a referral to the Occupational Health and Safety Unit
- 7.4 In cases where a potential health and safety risk exists and/ or cases of potential gross misconduct consideration should be given to suspending the member of staff/ learner from College pending further investigation.
- 7.5 The College will make every reasonable effort to provide assistance and counselling for staff/ learners with an identified substance misuse problem (including paid time off for staff under the usual sick pay/ leave arrangements to receive counselling, rehabilitation or treatment).
- 7.6 Taking into account advice received from the Occupational Health Safety Unit staff and learners will where possible be able to return to their duties/ studies during and/ or following a treatment programme. This will be unless it is agreed with the individual that a change in post / course if available would be beneficial, their continued employment/ studying is inadvisable on health grounds, or would constitute a health and safety risk to themselves or others.
- 7.7 Consideration will also be given to a phased programme of return to work/ study or redeployment or change of course if appropriate.

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- 7.8 In most cases where appropriate medical opinion suggests that an underlying substance misuse problem exists disciplinary action will not necessarily be taken with the following exceptions.
- In cases of misconduct for example, where a member of staff/ learner is believed to have reported for work/ study unfit due to the effects of alcohol, drugs/ other substances (other than drugs being taken as directed) or in cases where improper conduct is believed to have been committed under the influence of alcohol, drugs/ other substances.
  - If the problem is not resolved by treatment.
  - If the member of staff/ learner refuses or discontinues treatment/ professional help, despite their performance continuing to be effected.
  - If performance is affected for reasons other than and/ or in addition to an underlying problem.
- 7.9 Staff and learners should be clearly advised of the expected standards of performance, behaviour and / or attendance. These standards should be monitored and reviewed and staff and learners should be advised that disciplinary action may be taken if performance continues to be impaired following appropriate treatment/ support.
- 7.10 In cases where a potential disciplinary situation is identified any investigatory meetings should be conducted when the member of staff/ learner is considered to be in a position where to ensure they are able to respond fully and accurately to the allegations. Members of staff / learners have the right to be accompanied by a person of their choice.
- 7.11 An identified problem of substance misuse will not prevent disciplinary action being taken in cases of misconduct, although it may (depending on the particular circumstances) be taken into account as a mitigating factor in any disciplinary proceedings.
- 7.12 Where staff/ learners with an identified substance misuse problem refuse or discontinue a programme of assistance, despite their performance continuing to affect their work / study, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy

### **8.0 Testing Arrangements**

- 8.1 Where an individual has previously been identified as posing a risk to themselves, colleagues, learners or visitors, it may be necessary to instigate testing arrangements to ensure compliance with any rehabilitation programmes that have been agreed.
- 8.2 Staff and learners must be advised that testing for substances is being considered and referred to the Occupational Health and Safety Unit to discuss the process prior to formal consent being obtained.
- 8.3 A consent form outlining the conditions for testing must be signed by the member of staff or learner concerned and the procedure for substance abuse testing should be followed. (Appendix 1)
- 8.4 Failure to agree to testing will be deemed by the College to indicate non-compliance with a support programme and may lead to the matter being managed in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

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## 9.0 Roles and Responsibilities

### 9.1 Managers Role

- to set a good example of acceptable standards of behaviour to staff, learners and others
- to be familiar with this policy and associated procedures
- to ensure that all staff and learners understand the policy and their responsibilities
- to be alert and to monitor changes in for example work performance, attendance and intervene early where there are signs of problems
- to identify any aspects of the working environment which could lead to substance misuse problems and change them as appropriate
- to refer staff and learners for assistance where appropriate
- to undertake training in the management of substance misuse issues.

### 9.2 Role of the Occupational Health and safety Unit

- to provide guidance, assistance and advice to any member of staff or learner who has a problem which might be associated with substance misuse
- to provide an impartial and confidential service to staff and learners which may include counselling, assessment and referral to another agency
- to help identify and to assist in any educational initiative to promote knowledge of substance misuse
- to provide medical advice to managers when dealing with substance misuse matters
- to support and assist with the administration of appropriate testing programmes/arrangements

### 9.3 Role of Personnel

- To be responsible for the implementation and co-ordination of the policy
- Where appropriate to refer individuals for assistance
- To advise on the appropriateness of the disciplinary policy, sickness absence management procedure and rehabilitation policy
- To support managers in dealing with cases of substance misuse

### 9.4 Role of Staff and Learners

- To be aware of the social, health and employment /study effects of alcohol/substance misuse
- To avoid covering up or colluding with colleagues/peers
- To urge colleagues/peers to seek help if they have problems arising from substance misuse
- To be familiar with this policy and associated procedures
- To take a responsible approach when consuming alcohol and not use illegal drugs

### 9.5 Role of the Trade Union/ Professional Association/Learner Union Representatives

- To encourage members/learners who have a problem with substance misuse to seek help voluntarily
- To advise members/learners of their rights and responsibilities under the policy
- To help support members/learners at work/study and assist with rehabilitation programmes

## 10.0 Monitoring and Review

The Head of Human Resources should monitor the operation of this policy to ensure its effectiveness in conjunction with the Occupational Health and Safety Unit

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### **11.0 Communication and Training**

Information regarding this policy should be included as part of the induction process and other appropriate training programmes. Training will be available for all managers who will be involved in dealing with substance misuse issues.

**Consent to Drugs/ Alcohol Testing**

I give my consent to undergo a breathalyser and /or blood/ urine test if requested by my line manager/tutor. I understand that in the event that the testing equipment indicates a result greater than..... or is not available I will be requested to undergo a blood or urine test which will be sent for analysis to an independent laboratory.

\*The alcohol limit that I will be measured against is:

- 13\*\*Micrograms of alcohol per 100 ml of breath
- 20\*\*Milligrams of alcohol per 100 ml of blood/urine

\*The drug limit that I will be measured against is:

.....  
.....

\*Delete as appropriate

\*1 Limits may be adjusted dependant upon individual circumstances as appropriate

This limit may only be altered with the agreement of the line manager/Personnel/Occupational Health and Safety Unit.

The results of any test carried out to determine the presence of alcohol/drugs will be recorded in my medical record in the occupational Health and safety Unit and interpretation of these results given to my line manager and Personnel.

I also confirm that I will comply with the programme of rehabilitation as agreed with the Occupational Health Physician.

I will provide evidence when requested by my line manager of my attendance at any meetings, which form part of my rehabilitation programme.

This arrangement will be reviewed on:.....

Signed:.....

Print Name:.....

Dated:.....

Signed on Behalf of Sandwell  
College:.....

Dated:.....