CIPD

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MANAGING DRUG AND ALCOHOL MISUSE AT WORK

Guidance for line managers on providing support and dealing with disclosures

Guide
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The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The registered charity champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 150,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Introduction to the line manager support materials

Managers play a vital role in determining the health, wellbeing and engagement of their team. They also play an essential part in managing particular people management issues that arise in their team, such as bereavement, conflict, sickness absence and mental health problems, which can have a negative impact on employee health, wellbeing and engagement if not well managed.

CIPD research identified five key behavioural areas that are important for line managers to support the health, wellbeing and engagement of those who work for them:

Being open, fair and consistent

Handling conflict and people management issues

Providing knowledge, clarity and guidance

Building and sustaining relationships

Supporting development

A line manager's behaviour and the culture they create in their team is the biggest influence on an employee's work experience. Capability in these five behavioural areas, underpinned by an attitude of care, respect, compassion, wisdom and kindness, is vital for line managers to manage the health, wellbeing and engagement of their team. Such capability will also provide the foundation for line managers to manage particular people management issues and will enable managers to take a positive approach, recognise employee needs in these situations and manage them in ways that are sensitive, supportive and inclusive.

The CIPD has created a range of support materials to help you adopt a management approach that supports good health, wellbeing and engagement in your team by helping you explore and develop your management capability. Designed for anyone who manages people, the guidance and exercises are quick and easy to use. They can help you save time and get better results by managing people well – all of which is good for your own wellbeing as well as that of your team.

To build on these resources, the CIPD has also created a series of guides focusing on specific areas of people management that aim to support managers in dealing with particular people management issues. Each of these guides provides practical information and advice relevant to that particular people management issue, as well as linking it to the approach covered in the support materials. The intention is that managers use the five key behavioural areas as the basis for managing all the issues, and draw on specific relevant behaviours from within the framework to help with the particular issue in question. Look out for the icons to understand which of the behaviours is particularly relevant to the issues being discussed. You can then refer back to the exercises to develop these behaviours further.

Introduction to this guide

Drug and alcohol misuse is a considerable issue within society and therefore also in the workplace. The 2018/19 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) found that 9.4% of adults aged 16 to 59 had taken a controlled drug (as classified under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971) in the last year (up from 8.3% in the 2015/16 survey).[1] Alcohol misuse findings show that an estimated 15% of adults in the UK are classed as high-risk drinkers (based on amount or frequency of consumption), and 2% of people within this category would be considered to have a 'possible dependence'.[2]

These issues can reach into workplaces and may affect people's performance at work in many ways. Many aspects of work can be linked to alcohol and drug use, including:

- work-related stress (as found by the TUC[3])
- long working hours
- jobs with high physical demand and risk of injury
- monotonous work
- poor supervision
- job insecurity (as highlighted by Dame Carol Black's review[4])
- shift or night work
- travelling for work
- working remotely
- business meals
- interface with a demanding or aggressive public (as found by the BMA[5]).

Given the statistics, it is likely that most line managers will, over the course of their career, need to provide support to someone in their team who is struggling with drug or alcohol misuse. If you are in this position, all the line manager behaviours identified by CIPD research as important to support team health, wellbeing and engagement will help you. In particular, the key behavioural areas which will assist you in managing this issue are:

Being open, fair and consistent, which will help you bring respect and openness, consistency and fairness to managing both the person who is struggling and the rest of the team, while also being kind and remaining calm in difficult situations.

Providing knowledge, clarity and guidance, which will help manage particular situations, for example, by giving someone who is struggling time to talk about what is going on, giving advice when necessary, being decisive when needed and taking responsibility for solving problems.

Building and sustaining relationships, including showing empathy, concern and consideration for all employees, taking an interest in them as individuals, so you can spot changes in behaviour, and offering opportunities for people to speak to you one-to-one.

Exercises 1, 2, 4 and 5 in the line manager support materials offer advice on how to develop these behaviours.

In addition, elements of the behaviour area **Handling conflict and people management issues** are relevant when an issue such as this arises, for example, seeking support for yourself and your team and using organisational resources, including getting guidance from HR. Look at Exercise 3 for advice on how to develop this area.

Line manager capability in managing and supporting employees is essential
The findings outlined above show that drug and alcohol misuse affects more people than is commonly thought; however, the CIPD *Managing Drug and Alcohol Misuse at Work* report suggests this issue is not being adequately managed in the workplace through appropriate support and training for line managers. Only 30% of organisations provide guidelines for managers on how to deal with disclosure and how to signpost to support, and just 27% give information for employees about disclosing a problem with alcohol and/or drugs.[6] This is despite the fact that line managers are most often:

- the person an employee will disclose an issue to
- the person who may pick up that an employee is struggling
- the person who will be immediately dealing with an incident at work.

The CIPD *Managing Drug and Alcohol Misuse at Work* report showed that, in addition, too few employers provide training for line managers on either recognising signs of stress (38%), or recognising the symptoms of drug and alcohol problems (26%). However, these investments in line manager capability were rated highly in terms of effectiveness in helping prevent drug and alcohol misuse.

Drug and alcohol misuse are significant health, safety and employee wellbeing concerns, and it's important that employers have preventative and supportive measures in place in addition to a clear policy on drug and alcohol misuse and any necessary disciplinary procedures.

This guidance therefore aims to help line managers to effectively support and manage someone who is struggling with drugs and/or alcohol to get help, regardless of whether there is a need for performance or disciplinary measures, and start to bridge the gap in training provision that was highlighted in the CIPD *Managing Drug and Alcohol Misuse at Work* report. This guide also outlines the importance of approaching the issue in terms of prevention. Line managers have a strong influence on the working culture and are ideally placed to be able to spot and address issues such as high workloads, long working hours and stress, as well as early warning signs of issues, and signpost people to support if needed.

We will outline the key steps that line managers can take to offer support to their team members if needed. These should be used alongside any organisational policy and process in place and following advice from HR.

It's important to remember that everyone's situation and needs will be different. Whatever their personal views, people managers should look to handle such cases professionally and with integrity – supporting people wherever possible and using external expertise and advice to ensure that there is a fair and unambiguous outcome. You will need not only to be consistent and fair and act with integrity, but also to bring kindness and respect and remain calm in what may be a challenging situation.

This relates closely to the behaviour area **Being open, fair and consistent.** Look at Exercise 1 and Exercise 2 for advice on how to develop this area.

Line managers are not expected to be experts on addiction or recovery, and should never try to solve any problems or issues entirely on their own. Instead, they should focus on working alongside HR professionals and other colleagues to build an inclusive and supportive culture that allows line managers to feel confident to discuss sensitive issues with staff and support them to get the help they need.

This relates closely to the element of seeking support for yourself and your team within the behaviour area **Handling conflict and people management issues.** Look at Exercise 3 for advice on how to develop this area.

Key recommendations

- **Create an environment where people feel able to ask for support.** Creating an environment where people feel able to ask for help, knowing they will be supported and signposted to help, is important.
- **Ensure you know what support and resources are available for your team.** Discuss these with your HR team and make sure the support available is communicated to your team.
- **You should feel capable and confident to manage and support employees**, but don't feel you need to be the expert or handle everything on your own. Make sure you know who to contact in HR for advice and support.
- **Avoid fuelling a drinking culture** – consider the implications for wellbeing and inclusion when planning work events.
- **Support employee rehabilitation.** It is important to be flexible and understanding about providing time off for someone to get treatment or support relating to alcohol or substance misuse.
- **If you are dealing with an issue, ask the individual about the support they need**, as everyone's situation will be different. Some people may require time out to get help, others may need flexibility in working time to attend appointments, and some people may require role adjustments such as addressing a high workload or stress levels.

These recommendations relate to the behaviour areas **Being open, fair and consistent** and **Providing knowledge, clarity and guidance**. Refer to Exercise 1, Exercise 2 and Exercise 4 for more on these areas.

In addition, people are more likely to ask for help if you have built a good relationship with them and shown empathy, concern and consideration. This takes time and needs to be an ongoing process of taking an interest in employees as individuals and interacting with them in a friendly way. People are also more likely to talk about such issues in a one-to-one setting, so providing opportunities for your employees to speak with you one-to-one will be important.

This relates closely to the behaviour area **Building and sustaining relationships.** Look at Exercise 5 for advice on how to develop this area.

If an employee discloses they may have a problem

If an employee discloses they may have a substance misuse issue:

- Ensure that it is kept confidential and not discussed with anyone other than the HR team.
- Tell the individual that there may be a need to make others aware in general terms (for example your own boss).
- Make a clear note of the conversation and the nature of the issue discussed.
- Take action immediately if there are safety-critical issues (for example driving). Consider any other health and safety implications – are there any other aspects of their role that may put them or others at risk? Discuss this with your HR team.
- Do not attempt to fix the issues by yourself but encourage the individual to contact an assistance service (like those listed at the end of this guide).

> This relates closely to the behaviour area **Providing knowledge, clarity and guidance.** Look at Exercise 4 for advice on how to develop this area.

If you suspect that the employee is misusing drugs or alcohol outside of work

If you suspect an employee may have a problem with drugs or alcohol outside of work:

- Be alert to any changes in behaviour/uncharacteristic actions by the individual.
- Make a note of any specific incidents (including the date/time).
- Escalate the situation if the individual clearly does something that would warrant formal action regardless of the potential cause (for example refuses an instruction, is repeatedly late, and so on).
- Balance confidentiality with the need to manage and communicate with colleagues who may become aware that there is a possible issue.

In order to be in a position to spot changes in behaviour, you will need to have built a relationship with each of your team members and sustained these over time, including taking an interest in them and interacting with them in a friendly way.

> This relates closely to the behaviour area **Building and sustaining relationships.** Look at Exercise 5 for advice on how to develop this area.

Your goal will be to encourage the employee to acknowledge that there is a problem that needs solving. You need to be seen to be firm but also fair, demonstrating qualities of concern and empathy, combined with practical, non-judgemental advice and direction. The tone of this discussion is crucial. An aggressive or hectoring attitude is likely to drive the substance misuser into denial. If you feel you need support, speak to your HR team for advice on how to have this type of conversation.

> This relates closely to the behaviour area **Being open, fair and consistent** and **Providing knowledge clarity and guidance**. Refer to Exercise 1, Exercise 2 and Exercise 4 for more on these areas.

Conversation checklist
- Avoid interruptions: switch off phones, ensure colleagues can't walk in and interrupt.
- Be caring and compassionate.
- Ask simple, open questions, such as, 'How are you coping today?'
- Ask, 'What can we do to support you?' (as an organisation).
- Avoid judgemental or patronising responses.
- Speak calmly.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Listen actively and carefully.
- Encourage the employee to talk if they would like to.
- Be prepared for some silences and be patient.
- Avoid making assumptions or being prescriptive – the individual is the best person to know what support may help them.
- If there are any agreed actions to help the individual, it may be helpful to follow up in a supportive email.

This checklist has been adapted from the CIPD and Mind's *People Manager's Guide to Mental Health*.

It's often the case that a person with a real or perceived problem may become the source of gossip or rumour. Sometimes this may be the first way you become aware of an issue. It is important to ensure that you respond to any concerns, while at the same time ensure that the individual's situation is kept confidential and that gossip – which can become exaggerated or ill-founded – is not allowed to persist. If you hear of anything which causes you concern, speak to your HR team about how best to proceed.

If an employee attends work clearly under the influence of drugs or alcohol
If you reasonably believe that an employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, consider sending the employee home or suspending them based on what is outlined in your organisation's policy.

Irrespective of any disciplinary action which may follow, the employee is likely to be a safety risk either to themselves or others. Take action immediately to deal with any safety-critical issues (such as operating machinery).

Consider whether any additional steps need to be taken to support the individual. If the employee is under the influence of drugs/alcohol, they should not drive, so organise a taxi to take them home. Do not attempt to prevent an employee from driving (for example by physically stopping them), as this could put you at risk. If necessary, contact the police. Consider whether the person's emergency contact needs to be alerted.

Once the immediate issue has been resolved, advice from HR should be sought as soon as possible on next steps.

This relates closely to **Handling conflict and people management issues.** Look at Exercise 3 for advice on how to develop this area.

Provide support and be flexible

Line managers play a pivotal role in providing ongoing and flexible support to employees who are getting treatment or support relating to substance misuse. Again, every situation will be different, but there will likely be a broad spectrum of the amount of time off people need, ranging from needing to attend appointments but remaining in work, to taking leave from work to get help.

Around only a fifth of employers said they provide paid time off for people to get the support they need for alcohol or drug misuse. Speak to individuals about the support and flexibility they need and work with your HR team to try to accommodate this.

More information on flexible working measures is available on the CIPD website, including examples of flexible working and a flexible working checklist.

This relates closely to the behaviour area **Providing knowledge, clarity and guidance.** Look at Exercise 4 for advice on how to develop this area.

Supporting someone's return to work after getting help

Another vital part of rehabilitation is support when an employee returns to work following substance misuse treatment. Around half of employers say they don't provide this for individuals who have taken time out to receive treatment for alcohol or drug misuse. However, the return-to-work support provided after any period of leave is important, and line managers should work with HR and the individual to establish what support would be welcome, such as a phased return to work. Use this opportunity to check in with your team member, see if any further support or adjustments to the job role or ways of working are required, and work together to enable the individual to make a successful return to work.

This relates closely to the behaviour area **Building and sustaining relationships.** Look at Exercise 5 for advice on how to develop this area.

Signpost to helpful services and resources

Make sure you direct team members to helpful services and resources, if you offer them, such as occupational health and employee assistance programmes, or point to external sources of support.

Supporting the mental and emotional wellbeing of employees is extremely important and support will often need to be ongoing. You might find it helpful to include information on or signpost to some of the following sources of information and advice:

Adfam National
Organisation that works with and on behalf of families affected by drug and alcohol problems. Helpful for the family of the alcohol or drug user.

Website: www.adfam.org.uk

Al-Anon
Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire provide support for anyone whose life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking.

Website: www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous
The largest self-help group for people who acknowledge they cannot handle alcohol and want a new way of life without it. Services are free. The comprehensive website explains the philosophy of AA, what to expect, and local groups.

Helpline: 0800 917 7650

Website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Alcohol Change UK
Leading UK alcohol charity formed from the merger of Alcohol Concern and Alcohol Research UK. Work for a society that is free from the harm caused by alcohol.

Website: https://alcoholchange.org.uk/

Cocaine Anonymous
National self-help group specifically for cocaine users.

Helpline: 0800 612 0225, open 10:00am to 10:00pm, 7 days

Website: https://cocaineanonymous.org.uk/

Drinkaware
An independent UK-wide alcohol education charity. Provides advice and information to anyone concerned about their own drinking or someone else's and a range of support tools to help people reduce their drinking, change their relationship with alcohol and improve their health. Free, confidential advice is provided through the online chat service, DrinkChat, and helpline, Drinkline (0300 123 1110). A workplace awareness training programme is provided by Drinkaware at Work.

Website: www.drinkaware.co.uk

Narcotics Anonymous
The largest self-help group for people who want to stop using drugs. Services are free.

Helpline: 0300 999 1212

Website: www.ukna.org (includes details of local groups)

Release
A registered charity able to advise on specialist areas of drugs law.

Helpline: 020 7324 2989

Website: www.release.org.uk

Talk to FRANK
A government-funded free service offering information and sources of support. The website provides detailed information on drugs that the non-specialist can understand.

Helpline: 0300 123 6600

Website: www.talktofrank.com

WDP
Charity providing drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services across England. Also provide organisational training on drugs, alcohol, smoking, mental health and wellbeing.

Website: www.wdp.org.uk

Guidance for line managers

We Are With You (formerly Addaction)
Drug, alcohol and mental health charity

Website: www.wearewithyou.org.uk

Rehab 4 Addiction
An advisory and referral service for people who suffer from alcohol, drug and behavioural addiction.

Helpline: 0800 140 4690

Website: https://www.rehab4addiction.co.uk/

Useful links
- NHS: Drug addiction: getting help
- NHS: Alcohol support

You may want to make use of the training scenarios available on the CIPD website for further guidance on how to handle drug and alcohol misuse within your team.

Consider using the full range of support materials if you haven't already done so
If reading this guide has highlighted areas of people management capability that you would like to develop, why not use the full range of support materials to help you adopt a management approach that supports good health, wellbeing and engagement in your team?

You can get insight into your management capability across all five behavioural areas by completing the quiz and then use the step-by-step guidance to help you get feedback, identify strengths and areas to develop, and plan the action you will take. There is also an action plan sheet, which can be used to note down and track your actions; a quiz to help you identify potential barriers and develop strategies to overcome them; and a series of exercises to provide ideas and inspiration relevant to each of the behavioural areas, some of which have already been highlighted above.

Notes

1   Home Office. (2019) *Drug misuse: findings from the 2018/19 Crime Survey for England and Wales*. London: The Stationery Office.
2   Gunstone, B., Piggott, L., Butler, B., Appleton, A. and Larsen, J. (2018) *Drinking behaviours and moderation among UK adults: findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2018*. London: YouGov and Drinkaware.
3   https://www.tuc.org.uk/resource/drugs-and-alcohol-workplace
4   Black, C. (2016) *An independent review into the impact on employment outcomes of drug or alcohol addiction, and obesity* (p18).
5   Nicholson, P.J., Mayho, G. and Sharp, C. (2016) *Alcohol, drugs and the workplace: the role of medical professionals*. A briefing from the BMA Occupational Medicine Committee. 2nd ed. London: BMA.
6   CIPD. (2020) *Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work report*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

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