

### **Introduction**

The bare facts on alcohol and drug consumption in the UK are frightening. More than a quarter of men report that they drink over the recommended maximum 21 units of alcohol a week, while 19% of women consume over the 14 recommended units of alcohol for their gender.

In all, 38% of 16-59-year-olds have used one or more illicit drugs in their lifetime with 12% having used an illicit drug once in the last year. Among 16-24-year-olds, 31% have used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months.

The Governments Strategy Unit, in its annual report for Alcohol Reduction estimated that alcohol-related loss to the UK economy was up to 6.4 billion a year as a result of:

- . increased sickness absence due to injury
- . the inability to work (unemployment & early retirement)
- . premature deaths among economically active people (people of working age)

It is in the interests of employers who care about their employees and want a healthy and engaged workforce to manage any alcohol & drug related issues effectively through effective policies & procedures and the provision of support for individuals who may develop dependency problems.

### **Drinking and Driving**

Over 200 people are killed and more than 1,300 seriously injured in drink driving incidents each year. Often it is an innocent person who suffers, not the driver who is over the drink drive limit. Pedestrians, motorcyclists, pedal cyclists and vehicle passengers are killed or seriously injured by drink drivers each year.

The legal drink drive limit is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. In Scotland it is lower, 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. In Northern Ireland, the limit is the same as in England and Wales but there are plans to lower it.

Every year the Police breath test over half a million drivers or riders and over 60,000 (12% of those tested) fail or refuse to take the test. They can face a driving ban of at least 12 months, a large fine and possible imprisonment.

However, the risk of having an accident increases well below the legal limit. Drivers with a blood alcohol level between 20mg/100ml and 50mg/100ml are three times more likely to be killed in a crash than those who have no alcohol in their blood. The risk for drivers with a blood alcohol level between 50mg/100ml and 80mg/100ml (still below the legal limit) is at least six times greater and it rises to 11 times with an alcohol level between 80mg/100ml and 100mg/100ml.

Alcohol impairs judgement, making drivers over-confident and more likely to take risks. It slows their reactions, increases stopping distances, affects judgement of speed and distance and reduces the field of vision.

Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream very quickly but takes about an hour for 1 unit to be removed by a healthy liver. The exact number of units of alcohol in a drink depends on its size and



alcoholic strength by volume (abv). E.G., a 175ml glass of wine of 12%abv would be 2.1 units and a 250ml glass of the same wine would be 3 units.

Drinkers cannot be sure of how much alcohol they are consuming because the alcoholic strength of drinks varies enormously as does the size of measures. Drinks poured at home are usually larger than ones bought in a pub or restaurant and it is difficult to know the strength of a drink without seeing the bottle.

The speed with which alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream varies depending on a person's size, age, weight & gender and whether they have eaten. The same amount of alcohol creates different blood alcohol levels in different people.

**Never rely on trying to calculate accurately how much alcohol is in your body and whether you are above or below the drink drive limit.**

### Drugs and Driving

Almost 120 people are killed each year in accidents involving drivers who were impaired by illegal drugs or medicines, over 400 seriously injured and around 1,100 injured.

A new drug law came into force in England & Wales in March 2015 and made it an offence to drive, attempt to drive or be in charge of a motor vehicle with certain drugs in the body above a specified limit. This applies to illegal drugs, prescribed medicines and over-the-counter medicines.

The law sets very low limits for eight illegal drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy & ketamine, so taking even a small amount could put a person over the limit. The limits for eight prescription drugs (clonazepam, diazepam, flunitrazepam, lorazepam, oxazepam, temazepam, methadone & morphine) are higher than normal prescribed doses. So, someone taking a medicine under the advice of a healthcare professional and/as printed on the drug information leaflet should not exceed the limit. However, they must still be fit to drive, so anyone taking medicines should talk to their doctor or associated health professional before driving.

Although this new law only applies to specific drugs, anyone driving while unfit through drugs, whether illegal or prescribed or over-the-counter medicines can still be prosecuted under the previous law which remains in place.

The Police can and do, conduct roadside tests to help them assess whether a driver may be impaired and the penalties for driving under the influence of drugs are the same for drink driving.

### Illegal Drugs

Drugs like alcohol can affect a driver's behaviour and body in a variety of ways (depending on the drug). These can include:

- . slower reactions
- . poor concentration
- . distorted perception
- . over confidence
- . erratic behaviour
- . aggression, panic attacks or paranoia

- . severe fatigue
- . tremors, dizziness or cramps

The effects may last for hours or even days and vary from person to person and can be difficult for an individual to detect.

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Taking alcohol & drugs together is even worse as their effects combine and impairment can be multiplied. Even low levels of alcohol mixed with low levels of drugs can cause significant impairment.

### **The Legal Penalties**

The penalties for drink driving, driving under the influence of drugs and driving while unfit through drugs are:

- . A minimum 12-month driving ban.
- . A criminal record.
- . A substantial fine or imprisonment or both.

## Alcohol & Drugs Policy

### Policy Statements

#### The Purpose of the Policy

- . To help protect employees by raising an awareness of both alcohol and drug related issues.
- . To ensure that employees use of either alcohol or drugs does not impair the safe and efficient running of the organisation and their role within the organisation.
- . To ensure “no risks” are taken with the health & safety of employees, customers and the general public.

#### Objective of the Policy

- . To set out the rules of the use of alcohol and drugs, so that employees are aware of the likely consequences for their employment if they misuse them.
- . To identify any alcohol and drug problems at an early stage.
- . To ensure the image of the organisation and reputation of the organisation is maintained.
- . Achieve a balance between supporting an employee who asks for help with a problem and the need to preserve health & safety at work and the delivery of a high-quality service.

#### Scope of the Policy

- . This policy applies to all employees, at all levels, including management & volunteers.
- . The policy applies to all contractors and any agency staff if used.
- . The policy covers the misuse of alcohol, illicit drugs and prescribed drugs where there is a consequent effect on their employment.

#### Rules of Policy – Alcohol

- . Employees are responsible for maintaining sensible and safe drinking levels.
- . Employees are not allowed to drink during working hours. This includes meal breaks and on-call duties.
- . No employee is banned from drinking, but they must maintain a professional conduct during working hours.
- . There will be no consumption of alcohol on company premises, other than at special events, restaurants, social clubs etc for celebratory matters. i.e., retirements, birthdays or festive breaks.
- . No employee should report to duty within certain hours of drinking alcohol.
- . An alcohol related incident will be reported to the Police.

- . No employee may possess, consume or provide drugs or alcohol while on duty. (except prescription drugs).
- . Drug dealing or drug possession will be reported to the Police.
- . No employee will report to work under the influence of drugs.
- . Employees in safety critical jobs (driving) who are found to be under the influence of drugs will be liable to dismissal, regardless of the circumstances.
- . Employees who are taking prescribed medication that may affect their ability to perform their duties must notify the management team with immediate effect.

#### **Rules of Policy – Driver Licence Checks**

- . Conduct regular (3-monthly) driver licence checks in order to track any endorsements. i.e., driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and subsequent bans or licence points/fines given.

#### **Rules of Policy- Random Alcohol & Drug Testing**

- . Organisations should ensure that employees subject to random testing are properly communicated with at all times.
- . Random testing should only be applied to those workers who are employed in safety-critical roles in this case, bus and coach drivers.
- . Random testing should be carried out in a genuinely random way and not targeting certain individuals.
- . The policy on random testing must be clearly communicated to all safety-critical workers and the possible consequences of being tested.
- . Random testing can only take place with the employees written consent and such consent should be available and placed on the employees' personal file.

#### **Rules of Policy-Disciplinary Action**

The following incidents are considered to be serious offences warranting dismissal subject to the disciplinary procedure and full investigation.

- . Using alcohol or under the influence of alcohol whilst in the workplace.
- . Possessing, selling or using illicit drugs within the workplace.
- . Being convicted of any alcohol or drug related criminal offence, regardless of whether the offence took place inside or outside the workplace.
- . Any disciplinary action will be the result of a full investigation carried out by the management team.

