

THE FACTS

- Substance misuse refers to the misuse of alcohol, prescribed drugs, volatile substances and the use of illegal drugs.
- Alcohol and drugs affect our behaviour and ability to carry out everyday activities in a safe manner.
- The Institute of Personnel and Development (1998) suggest that the incidence of alcohol and drug misuse at work is rising. This will increase costs due to absenteeism or impaired productivity.
- A recent survey in Britain found that 60% of employers reported problems due to alcohol misuse and 27% due to drug problems.
- In 1997 the overall cost to the Northern Ireland economy due to substance misuse was estimated to be £238 million.
- An alcohol and drug support service indicated that three out of every four people who seek help for alcohol dependence are in employment and one in four people who seek help for a drug problem are also in employment.
- The Health and Safety Executive's Drug Misuse at Work booklet suggests that employers can benefit from the introduction of a substance misuse policy by:
 - Reducing the risk of accidents caused by impaired judgement;
 - Creating a more caring working environment by offering support to those employees who declare a drug-related problem thereby improving employee morale
 - Saving on the costs of recruiting and training employees to replace those whose employment, because of untreated drug misuse, might be terminated;
 - Enhancing the public perception of the organisation as a responsible employer by contributing to society's efforts to combat drug misuse.

INVESTING IN
EMPLOYEE HEALTH

INVESTING IN
YOUR BUSINESS



WHAT A WORKPLACE CAN DO

- Provide and display information on sensible drinking, drug facts and sources of support in an area that all employees have access to, possibly in the form of posters on the inside of toilet doors or on a notice board in the bathroom.
- Develop and implement a policy which views substance misuse as a health problem rather than an immediate cause for disciplinary action or dismissal. (see Help is at Hand for assistance in this area).
- An essential element of dealing with substance misuse in the workplace is not only to encourage safe working practices but also to support those employees with alcohol/ drug dependence to seek help. A key factor in a good substance misuse policy is the mechanism to allow employees to be referred to specialist agencies for counselling with the aim of reintegrating them back into the workplace.

HELP IS AT HAND

- Health Promotion Department
12c Gransha Park, Clooney Road, Derry/Londonderry.
028 7186 5127
- Northlands Centre
Shepards Way
Derry/Londonderry
028 7131 3232

RESOURCES

- Alcohol and the Workplace, Kevin Doogan and Robin Means (Eds.), published by SAUS in 1990.
- Don't Mix It: A Guide For Employers On Alcohol At Work, produced by the Health & Safety Executive in 1996.
- Drug Misuse At Work: A Guide For Employers, produced by the Health & Safety Executive in 1998.

The above resources are available from the Resource and Graphic Centre at the Health Promotion Department.

INVESTING IN
EMPLOYEE HEALTH

INVESTING IN
YOUR BUSINESS



Notes