

# **The Church of St. Patrick Drumbeg Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse Policy**

## **Contents:**

1. [Introduction](#)
  2. [Scope of this Policy](#)
  3. [Aims of this Policy](#)
  4. [Legal Considerations](#)
  5. [Definitions](#)
  6. [Responsibilities](#)
  7. [Information on the use of Drugs/Substance Abuse](#)
  8. [Information on alcohol use](#)
  9. [Use of Illegal Drugs and/or Alcohol Whilst at Work](#)
  10. [Identifying Potential Problems](#)
  11. [Medication](#)
  12. [Right of Search](#)
  13. [Employee Testing](#)
  14. [Treatment and Rehabilitation](#)
  15. [Communication and Training](#)
  16. [Enforcement of this Policy](#)
  17. [Informing the Police](#)
  18. [Related Policies and Documents](#)
  19. [Implementation, Monitoring and Review of this Policy](#)
- 

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Prescribed drugs play a crucial role in treating certain medical conditions. Moderate consumption of alcohol is also not likely to cause harm and is often an important part of social life. However, the taking of illegal drugs, high levels of alcohol consumption, and/or substance abuse (which includes solvents and other substances, as well as "legal highs") can lead to accidents, increased levels of absence and reduced productivity.

This policy is not contractual, but is intended to clarify our position and to help and protect workers from the effects of drugs, alcohol and substance abuse.

## **2. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy applies to all employees and workers, irrespective of status. All employees are engaged on the basis that they will provide the business with their best endeavours at all times. As judgement and the ability to make decisions are essential elements of all jobs at all levels, and as drugs, alcohol and other substances affect judgement and the ability to make decisions, it is important that no category of worker is excluded from this policy.

### **3. AIMS OF THIS POLICY**

Church of Ireland aims to provide a working environment that is safe, that minimises any risks to health and that makes adequate arrangements for employees' welfare whilst they are at work. The use or after-effects of drugs, alcohol and/or certain substances (including "legal highs" and whether or not prohibited by law), by any workers may put themselves or others at risk and/or result in harm and/or injury to themselves or others.

This policy therefore aims to clarify our rules relating to the use of drugs, alcohol and substances; to reduce the likelihood of impairment at work; to raise awareness of the impact of the use of drugs, alcohol and substances, of how this can be recognised and what support is available; and to clarify at what point we regard drug, alcohol or substance use as a disciplinary matter rather than a health problem.

### **4. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The following pieces of legislation apply to this policy:

- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc (NI) Order 1978 (with regard to the employer's duty to ensure, where practicable, the health and safety at work of its employees and the employees' duty to take reasonable care for their own safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions)
- The Data Protection Act 1998 (in terms of employee monitoring and health screening)
- The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

### **5. DEFINITIONS**

"Drugs or substance abuse" includes the misuse of any substance capable of causing intoxication. This includes all controlled drugs contained in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and specifically includes: cannabis (marijuana), opiates (including heroin), cocaine, any prescription drugs (including amphetamines and barbiturates) which are not obtained and used in a legally issued medical prescription, and any over-the-counter medicine or substance which is deliberately misused so as to impair the individual.

It also includes "legal highs". These imitate the effects of illegal drugs but are currently not illegal and not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. They contain synthetic chemical compounds and can have a range of effects on users.

In addition, substance abuse may include any other substance such as glue or solvents.

"Alcohol" means any ethyl-alcohol containing product which, if consumed, has the capacity to induce intoxication.

The "workplace" includes all land, property, car parks, buildings, structures, installations, lockers, toolboxes, vehicles or equipment owned, leased or used by Church of Ireland House for the conduct of its business.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITIES**

In applying this policy we recognise our responsibilities by:

- Placing the highest importance on the health, safety and welfare of all employees and workers in the conduct of our business
- Accepting the legal and moral obligation to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace
- Providing a commitment to support employees who require help and rehabilitation for health problems and to ensure that those who place their trust in us by admitting to a drugs, alcohol or substance abuse problem are treated with sensitivity and confidentiality
- Providing information about the harmful effects of drugs, alcohol and substance abuse to promote preventative action

Employees and workers must however take personal responsibility for their own health and actions insofar as they affect the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions. In addition, any employee who has a concern about any of his/her colleagues should raise this with [the Rector](#).

## **7. INFORMATION ON THE USE OF DRUGS/SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Drug misuse can lead to changes in behaviour which can have an impact on job performance, absenteeism and relationships with work colleagues.

The possession of certain drugs is illegal and could lead to criminal charges being brought against the user. The drugs which are subject to control come under three classifications:

- Class A: includes ecstasy (MDMA), crack cocaine, cocaine, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, methamphetamine (crystal meth), methadone.
- Class B: includes oral preparations of amphetamines, barbiturates, cannabis, codeine, methylphenidate (Ritalin), synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinone's.
- Class C: includes benzodiazepines (diazepam), gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), gamma-butyrolactone (GBL), ketamine, piperazines (BZP) and anabolic steroids.

"Legal highs" contain synthetic chemical compounds and are marketed as "not for human consumption". They are often sold as incense, bath salts or plant food.

The effects of illegal substances vary, including dizziness, slowing down and feelings of sleepiness, excessive thirst, being detached from reality, suffering from hallucinations etc.

## **8. INFORMATION ON ALCOHOL USE**

The use of alcohol affects individuals in different ways and there are a number of variables (such as size and weight) that mean some people feel the effects more quickly, and to a greater degree than others, when drinking the same amount. However, the impact of alcohol (even with a relatively low intake) is likely to affect the drinker's thinking, judgement, mood, co-ordination and speed of reaction.

Increased amounts can lead to significant mood swings and violence. In tandem with this is the physical damage that excessive drinking can cause: consumption of alcohol is known to increase blood pressure and has been linked to heart disease and associated coronary problems. Heavy "binge" drinking may put a strain on the liver and other muscle functions.

Once alcohol has entered the bloodstream it can only be removed by the liver. A healthy liver takes out one unit of alcohol per hour. It is therefore possible to be under the influence of alcohol at work even though the alcohol consumed was drunk the evening before: this applies particularly to heavy or "binge" drinkers.

A unit of alcohol is equivalent to 8gm or 10ml (1cl) of pure alcohol. Examples of 1 unit of alcohol include half a pint of beer, lager or cider (3.5% ABV); a single 25ml measure of spirit (40% ABV) or a small glass of wine (9% ABV).

The recommended weekly limits for men and women are no more than 14 units of alcohol each week (no alcohol at all for pregnant women). Government guidance also recommends that, in order to reduce the health risk further, it is better to spread alcohol consumption over 3 or more days rather than 1 or 2 heavy drinking sessions each week.

## **9. USE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL WHILST AT WORK**

The use, possession, distribution, purchase, sale, consumption or being under the influence of illegal drugs (or "legal highs") whilst at work is never permitted and will be regarded as gross misconduct. Employees and workers must not under any circumstances bring illegal drugs or legal highs into the workplace or to any event attended in the course of their employment, including social functions organised by Church of Ireland House.

Consumption of alcohol is permitted at [the discretion of either the Rector or the Select Vestry](#). However, such consumption must be reasonable and managers must remember their position of responsibility and ensure that anyone consuming alcohol acts in a responsible manner and does not drive or operate machinery when clearly not in a fit state to do so.

Employees and workers are also reminded that they are expected to behave appropriately at events which are organised by Church, such as training courses, seminars, Christmas or leaving parties or other such functions. Employees should ensure that they continue to speak and act in an appropriate manner. Whilst alcohol is permitted in moderation, the taking of illegal drugs or misuse of other substances is never condoned.

This policy extends to those who work from home at any point, including those on standby or callout.

In the interests of their own and their colleagues' safety, any employee or worker believed to be under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or solvents will be escorted off site pending investigation. Disciplinary action will take place when the employee has had time to recover from the effects of drugs/solvents or to become sober. This kind of behaviour will normally be treated as gross misconduct and result in summary dismissal.

## 10. IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Supervisors/team leaders and managers play a vital role in the early identification of potential problems. They should note and document any potential concerns: if a pattern begins to appear, reasonable grounds for concern are justified and the issues should be addressed based on deterioration of job performance.

The following characteristics, especially when arising in combinations, may indicate the presence of a drug, alcohol or substance related problem:

- Absenteeism: instances of unauthorised leave; frequent absences on Fridays and/or Mondays or immediately after pay day; leaving work early; lateness (especially on returning from lunch or unexplained absences from work more than the job requires); frequent trips to the rest room; excessive or unusually high level of sickness absence; unusual and increasingly suspicious reasons for absence; unscheduled short-term absences, with or without explanation.
- High accident level: either at work or elsewhere (ie driving, at home etc)
- Work performance: deterioration in work standards; difficulty in concentration; work requires increased effort; individual tasks take more time; problems with remembering instructions; increased incidence of mistakes; poor decision making; errors of judgement; loss of interest.
- Mood swings: fluctuations in mood in a single day or shift; irritability; nervousness; depression; general confusion.
- Physical evidence: multiple bruises; loss of weight and gaunt appearance; injection marks on arms (drugs used intravenously); tremor and sweating hands (alcohol or sedative withdrawal); signs of intoxication (slurred speech, unsteady on feet, confused); bleary eyed (alcohol and cannabis); smell of alcohol; tiredness/exhaustion.
- Personal appearance: such as wearing long sleeves in all weathers especially in the morning to cover up injection marks; becoming less neat in dress or appearance or sometimes excessive care about dress.
- Financial concerns: borrowing money from other workers.
- Relationships with colleagues: deterioration in relations with fellow workers and with management; avoidance of contact with manager/supervisor/team leader.

## 11. MEDICATION

From time to time employees or workers will suffer ailments or illnesses for which legally prescribed or legally available drugs are required, either to rectify the ailment itself or to relieve the symptoms. As these drugs may also have some form of side effect, it is important that if this is likely to affect job performance in any way (e.g. drowsiness), anyone taking such medication should check with his/her doctor or pharmacist about any possible side effects and notify his/her manager of this fact and the details. The aim is to protect everyone's safety and in certain cases it may be necessary to restrict some activities or move the person to other, less risky, work until fully recovered.

Employees and workers with long-term health conditions which require medication to control these are advised to inform us of what medication they take so that these details are kept on file and made available to any medical staff or first-aiders called in the event of a medical emergency or accident.

## **12. RIGHT OF SEARCH**

In order to enforce this policy, Church of Ireland reserves the right to inspect and search the workplace and, with his/her consent, any person or personal property. This includes lockers and own vehicles that are brought onto our premises. Whilst we have no power to enforce a personal search, failure to comply will be taken into account when considering whether disciplinary action is warranted.

Where the employee is a union member, we will attempt to notify his/her union representative prior to a search being undertaken however, if this is not possible, the employee can choose another representative or staff member to be in attendance while the search is conducted. Where possible a personal search will be undertaken by someone of the same sex. For further details, see our search policy, a copy of which is [kept in the Rectors Office](#).

## **13. EMPLOYEE TESTING**

We reserve the right to require medical screening by a [General Practitioner or Hospital](#) on any person [suspected of having taken drugs, alcohol or having abused a substance whilst at work or in the workplace](#).

Such workers will be advised of the purpose of the screening, exactly what information will be collected and held and for how long, the reasons for this and the consequences of the tests. Refusal to provide the necessary biological samples may be regarded as gross misconduct and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

In addition, testing of individuals may be undertaken whenever we have any suspicions of drug, alcohol or substance abuse and random testing may be introduced if we believe this to be a necessary deterrent or that it is necessary to assist us in identifying any key areas of risk. No employee selected for tests will be excused from these due to operational demands or difficulties. Employees randomly selected for testing will be notified discreetly and asked to report to the testing area immediately, where they will be provided with privacy whilst the testing process is completed. None of the employees selected for testing will be given prior notification, other than the request on the day. The only personnel with prior knowledge of the list of selected employees will be [the Rector](#). This will be for the purposes of planning appropriate dates, times and locations for testing.

All matters relating to medical assessment, test results and management communications will be treated in a confidential manner. The medical screening results will be supplied to [the Rector](#), but will not be given to any other person within Church of Ireland House or to any other company or individual seeking information on the individual without that person's written permission.

Individuals have the right to be supplied with a copy of their own test results if they request one.

In addition, if we suspect that an employee's work performance or conduct has been impaired through drugs, alcohol or substance abuse, we reserve the right to require the employee to undergo a medical examination to determine the cause of the problem.

#### **14. TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION**

All employees are encouraged not to cover up for colleagues with a drink or drug problem but to recognise that collusion represents a false sense of loyalty and will in the longer term damage those employees.

Employees who recognise that they have a drink or drug problem, or that they are at risk of developing one, are encouraged to come forward for confidential help. They should seek an appointment, in confidence, with [the Rector](#) who will, with their consent, make a referral to a company approved doctor or medical service for advice.

Employees must recognise that it is their responsibility and in their best interests to seek help at the earliest possible stage, when treatment is more effective and before the problems affect their work sufficiently to become a disciplinary matter. Employees enrolled in a rehabilitation programme will be subject to the normal sickness absence rules.

Church of Ireland House will provide employees who seek help for substance abuse problems with support, internally and through external agencies (where appropriate). This may include time off to attend meetings with counsellors etc.

If we believe that an employee is under the influence of either drugs, alcohol or solvents as a result of an abuse problem, the outcome of any disciplinary procedure will generally include requiring that the person seek help from one or more of the national organisations set up to advise on overcoming this.

Where an employee, having received treatment, suffers a relapse, we will consider the case on its individual merits. Medical advice may be sought in an attempt to ascertain how much more treatment/rehabilitation time is likely to be required for full recovery. At our discretion, more treatment or rehabilitation time may be given in order to help the employee to recover fully.

If, after an employee has received treatment, recovery seems unlikely, dismissal may result, but in most cases a clear warning will be given to the employee beforehand and a full medical investigation will have been undertaken.

Continuation in post or the offer of an alternative post during or after treatment will depend upon our business needs at that time.

If an employee declines the offer of referral for assessment and treatment; discontinues treatment before its satisfactory completion and continues to fall below standards required; or either disobeys an instruction given by the business with regard to rehabilitation or suffers a relapse during or following treatment, we reserve the right to withdraw our support and will deal with the matter under our disciplinary procedure.

Irrespective of the above, any employee who attends work under the influence of drugs, alcohol or substance abuse will be subject to disciplinary action and may be dismissed on grounds of gross misconduct.

## **15. COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING**

This policy will be made available to all staff and reference to it will be included in our Employee Handbook.

Where appropriate, supervisors/team leaders and managers will be briefed in order to develop "early recognition techniques" for identifying employee misuse of alcohol, drugs or other substances and in effective interviewing and counselling skills to ensure any issues are dealt with promptly, tactfully and firmly.

## **16. ENFORCEMENT OF THIS POLICY**

Breach of this policy by any employee will be fully investigated and dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Any other person breaching this policy will be asked to leave the workplace. In order to meet legal obligations, Church of Ireland House will inform the police and any other appropriate authorities if there is reasonable suspicion that a criminal act has been committed in the workplace.

Any employee or worker concerned about the implementation of this policy, or who has concerns for his/her health and safety, should raise these in the first instance with his/her line manager. If appropriate action is not taken to resolve the situation within five working days, he/she should raise the issue with [the Rector](#).

## **17. INFORMING THE POLICE**

The supply, sale or possession of illegal drugs is a criminal offence. As from 6 April 2016, the production, distribution, sale and supply of all psychoactive substances ("legal highs") is prohibited, with the exception of those in everyday use such as medicines, alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine.

Please note that we will not hesitate to inform the police if we believe that illegal drugs or legal highs are in the possession of an employee, or are being used, sold or distributed by our employees and/or on our premises. Employees involved in such activities will be liable for summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

## **18. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS**

We also have the following related policies and documents: e.g. health and safety policy, which are kept in the [Rectors Office](#) and the employee may review these with their manager upon request.



## **19. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

This policy has been accepted and approved by the Select Vestry and will take effect from [1<sup>st</sup> December 2016](#).

[The Select Vestry and the H&S Officer](#) has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on an [Annual basis](#) and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in legislation or to our working practices.

Employees will be consulted about any proposed changes, and adequate notice given of these.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be referred to [The Select Vestry or the H&S Officer](#)

### **THIS POLICY WAS REVIEWED ON:**

<i><a href="#">9<sup>th</sup> February 2018</a></i>			
<i><a href="#">3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019</a></i>			
<i><a href="#">4<sup>th</sup> March 2022</a></i>			
<i><a href="#">16<sup>th</sup> February 2023</a></i>			