



Drug Alcohol Policy

September 2025



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Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the Mosaic Federation policy review cycle.

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Governing Board on 27 November 2025

It is due for review in October 2026.

Head Teacher:	Date:
Chair of Governors:	Date:
Vice Chair of Governors:	Date:

Drug, Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy

**People & Organisational Change Service
September 2025**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote a safe, healthy, and productive environment for all employees, including agency workers and those working on behalf of the council ensuring that the workplace remains free from the negative effects of drug, alcohol, and substance misuse. This policy aims to:

- **Protect Health & Wellbeing** – Safeguard employees and others from the risks associated with alcohol and substance misuse, supporting their physical and mental well-being.
- **Maintain Safety & Compliance** – Ensure adherence to legal requirements and workplace safety regulations to prevent accidents, injuries, or impaired performance.
- **Encourage Responsible Behaviour** – Foster a culture of accountability and responsibility by discouraging misuse and providing guidance on support options.

- **Provide Support & Rehabilitation** – Offer resources for employees seeking help with alcohol and substance-related challenges, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to well-being.
- **Preserve Professionalism & Productivity** – Prevent the negative impact of alcohol and substance misuse on work quality, relationships, and overall organisational success.

This policy is designed to create a supportive and structured approach for addressing alcohol and substance-related concerns, balancing the need for workplace standards with employee welfare.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all employees including agency workers and those working on behalf of South Tyneside Council including school-based employees where the governing bodies of individual schools have adopted the Policy.

3. Our Council Values

Our Values are the things we most care about. In applying every policy and process, we must consider and uphold our PROUD Values. These define what we stand for as an organisation, how we work and how we act.

- Professional – we uphold high standards.
- Respectful – we value people.
- Open and honest – we trust each other.
- Understanding and engaging – we care about people.
- Deliver what we say we will - we provide great services.

Under each Value is a set of guiding behaviours. These apply to every person who works for or represents South Tyneside Council. They are our promise to residents, each other and to all who interact with the Council.

4. Procedures

The consumption of alcohol or drugs can significantly impair an employee's ability to perform their duties effectively and may also pose a serious risk to the health and safety of others. As outlined in the Driver's Handbook and required by the Operator Licence, adherence to this policy is essential to maintaining a safe and responsible working environment.

The council will support, where possible, people who are experiencing substance misuse or alcohol related issues and recognises the importance of early identification and support.

In cases where an employee is unable to perform their duties satisfactorily as a result of an incident of drug or alcohol misuse the circumstances will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action being taken, in accordance with the Council's disciplinary policy. Depending on the findings of the investigation, this could constitute gross misconduct.

Where a person is unable to safely carry out their duties through the deliberate or unintentional misuse of prescribed drugs, the process to follow will be covered by this policy and procedures.

Managers Responsibilities:

- To communicate this policy effectively, in a method which is most suitable to employees, in your area of responsibility.
- Reinforce workplace safety by maintaining high levels of awareness among employees of the risks that arise from the misuse of drug, alcohol or substances.
- To be aware of this policy, local resources and services available via the Employee Wellbeing Programme, third-party organisations and Occupational Health, which are detailed [below](#).
- Understand the effects of drug, alcohol and substance misuse, and to be alert and monitor changes in an employee's performance, behaviour, timekeeping, sickness and all incident patterns. Managers should seek advice from the HR Advisory Team where possession/misuse/attendance at work under the influence of drugs, alcohol and/or other substances is suspected, at the earliest opportunity.
- Take appropriate and early intervention where potential drug, alcohol or substance misuse has been identified. Managers shall liaise with the relevant People and Organisational Change Team where necessary.
- Observe strict confidentiality as far as practicably possible, sharing information with only those people/services that require the information.
- Pursue good practice when organising work or social events by ensuring that ample supplies of non-alcoholic drinks are available or consider holding the event in an alcohol-free environment. Where it has been determined and agreed that alcohol should be served at a workplace event, ensure that any employees who have been invited to partake in alcohol will not undertake any employment duties following the consumption of alcohol.
- Ensure that any employee who exhibits outward signs of impairment through use of drugs, alcohol or substances is safely removed from the workplace and

the appropriate steps are followed. Please consult your HR Advisor for further guidance.

- Request and arrange a drug and/or alcohol test if it is reasonable to do so, as stipulated in this policy and procedures.
- If necessary, request and arrange for a drug and alcohol test in a post-incident situation, [as per detail below](#).
- Ensure that employees tested under this policy and procedure do not return to work until a negative test has been received.
- Provide employees with support when dealing with situations involving drug, alcohol or substance misuse, including employees who have caring responsibilities for others with alcohol, or substance misuse issues.
- Instigate an investigation, in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure and with support from HR Advisory Team, where appropriate.
- To be aware and follow the [Driving at Work Guidance Procedures](#).

Employees Responsibilities:

- Take responsibility to ensure their own safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.
- Report fit for duty when they are working their contracted hours; this includes any out of hours call outs.
- Understand and comply with this Drug, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy as part of their obligation to safely perform their duties.
- Take advice from their GP, pharmacist or dentist about the effects of any prescribed medication regarding their ability to function safely at work. There is a duty on employees to ensure that medical practitioner(s) providing medication are aware of the employee's job requirements and notifying their manager in advance of any potential side effects that may impair their ability to work safely.
- Notify their manager if they believe that any employee may not be fit for duty due to drug, alcohol and substance misuse.
- Co-operate with any investigation, support and/or assistance provided by the Council or its partners, including any request to undertake Drug and/or Alcohol testing.

- Urge colleagues to seek help if they have any drug alcohol, or other substance misuse related issue.
- Seek support from their GP, managers, HR Advisory, Occupational Health Team and outside agencies, if they are worried about their own alcohol or drug use. If any employee has concerns around drug, alcohol or substance misuse that they would like to discuss there are a number of organisations they can contact listed [below](#).
- Ensure they do not have illegal drugs in their possession including storage of illegal drugs in lockers, drawers, council vehicles or other personal areas.
- If an employee is under the influence of drugs, alcohol or a substance and they unexpectedly receive a work-related call and they are not fit for duty they should request the caller contacts someone else and must not attend work.
- Employees must not possess, consume or misuse drug, alcohol or substances during their contracted working hours regardless of their working location. During celebration events, staff who wish to consume alcohol must be keyed out or have completed their shift, and they must not undertake any employment duties afterward.
- If an employee suspects their drink or substance has been tampered with (spiked) meaning drugs or alcohol were added without their knowledge or consent they should immediately report the incident to the police and seek medical assistance. They must also inform a manager or supervisor as soon as possible, ideally at the start of their shift.
- To be aware and follow the [Driving at Work Guidance Procedures](#).

Testing Procedures

South Tyneside Council will engage a third-party organisation to carry out alcohol and substance testing. All tests will be carried out as soon as reasonably practicable. [Click here on how to request a drug or alcohol test](#)

Circumstances which may warrant an alcohol and substance test include:

Reasonable Cause Testing:

Where a manager has reasonable grounds to believe that the actions, appearance or conduct of an employee are indicative of impairment by drug, alcohol or substance misuse the employee will be required to submit to a drug and alcohol test.

Grounds for testing are based on personal observations of an employee such as (but not limited to):

- Observed use or evidence of use or possession of substance (for example, smell of alcohol, slurred speech, erratic behaviour)
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or drug or alcohol misuse use on work premises (internal or external), in a work vehicle or their own vehicle when on Council business.

Post Incident Testing:

The Council may conduct drug and alcohol testing for employees when involved in a work-related incident, of one or more of the following:

- A serious injury including Road Traffic Collision (RTC).
- Any incident risk ranked as high-risk or having the potential to be high risk.

However, this test is not required for individual employees where the responsible manager is satisfied that there is clear evidence that the acts or omissions of that employee could not have been a contributing factor (e.g., structural or mechanical failure or environmental factors).

No employee tested under this policy and procedure will be permitted to recommence work until a negative test has been obtained. Advice should be taken from HR Advisory regarding the type of leave to be used whilst awaiting a test result.

All employees are required to report to a manager observations that cause them to suspect that another employee may not be fit for duty. The failure by an employee to report and the failure by the manager to instruct that a test be conducted, where there are reasonable grounds for a test is a breach of this policy and may be investigated under the disciplinary procedure.

Return to work testing

Drug and alcohol testing may be conducted and a negative result is obtained before an employee who has produced a non negative* / positive test result can return to work. These individuals may also be subject to unscheduled testing as a condition of continued employment. Please consult your HR Advisor for further guidance.

**** a “non-negative” result means that the initial screening test detected the presence of a substance, but it hasn’t yet been confirmed as a positive result.***

Refusal to submit samples

The Council reserve the right to require any employee to submit a sample test at any time under the circumstances within this policy and procedures. Sample tests will include breath for alcohol and finger print for drugs. A failure to adhere to this requirement will be considered an intentional refusal to follow a reasonable managerial instruction and negative assumptions may be made about the level of intoxication.

The following are some examples of unacceptable conduct that can be considered a refusal to test; however this is not an exhaustive list:

- Failure to appear for any test after being directed to do so by your employer
- Failure to provide a sample for any test
- Failure to cooperate with any part of the testing process
- Failure to remain at the testing site until the testing process is complete
- Failure to permit the observation or monitoring of you providing a sample
- Failure to take a second test when directed to do so

Test Results

Drug and alcohol test results will be deemed non negative / positive if they meet or exceed the specified concentrations:

Type	Method of Testing	Threshold Level
Alcohol	Breath	35 (µg) micrograms of alcohol per 100 ml of breath. (which is the legal drink-drive limit)
Illegal Substances	Finger Print	Zero Tolerance

Employees with a non negative / positive result will also be signposted to support services.

The Council will not initiate investigation procedures concerning an employee's personal use of drug, alcohol or substances unless such use has a current or potential negative impact on the employee's ability to perform their duties in a safe manner.

Employees are encouraged to seek advice and support at any time through substance misuse and alcohol treatment service. In cases where drug, alcohol or substance misuse occurs outside of working hours or off Council premises, the Council reserves the right to take appropriate action as necessary if the interests or reputation of the Council is put at risk, in line with the Council's Code of Conduct.

Please consult your HR Advisor for further guidance.

Challenging Test Results

If an employee wishes to challenge a non-negative or positive test result, they must raise the issue with the third-party organisation responsible for conducting the test.

Vehicle Breathalyser Measures

Some designated vehicles will be equipped with an ignition interlock device that requires a breathalyser test before the engine can start. Employees must provide a breath sample that meets the required alcohol limit to operate the vehicle. This measure is in accordance with the Driver's Handbook and Operator Licence requirements, ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations. Failure to provide a valid breath sample or attempting to circumvent the system may result in disciplinary action. This policy is designed to promote responsible vehicle operation and safeguard the wellbeing of employees, residents, and visitors of South Tyneside.

Disciplinary procedure

The Council identifies the following conditions as grounds for disciplinary action in accordance with its disciplinary policy and procedure.

- Consuming drugs, alcohol or a substance whilst on the Council's premises (internal or external), in a work vehicle or their own vehicle when on Council business.
- Attend work while impaired from consumption of drugs, alcohol or substances consumed outside of the workplace.
- Refusal to provide a test for alcohol or a substance when instructed.
- The production of a positive / non negative test result.

The above conditions are not exhaustive but may constitute gross misconduct. All situations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

5. Training and Information for managers and employees

Training and information is available to all employees and managers to support them in identifying alcohol and substance misuse issues in the workplace, improving personal knowledge/awareness and supporting others, including making a brief intervention, signposting or referring to support services, raising and discussing issues with employees/friends/family etc. including:

First Contact Clinical Public Health training programme – modules include:

- Alcohol Awareness
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse
- Making Every Contact Count

To book visit <https://www.firstcontactclinical.co.uk/Courses/Change4Life> or call 0191 432 9838.

E-learning modules (health and social care employees only – requires registration via <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/>):

Online resources:

Guidance for managing drug, alcohol and substance misuse at work – Practical guidance for employers and line managers on how to manage and support employees, including advice on policies, training and links to further resources:

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/drug-alcohol-misuse-work-guide#gref>

6. Links to Guidance

The following services and resources are available to help managers and employees:

Local alcohol support information available via:

<https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/35918/Alcohol>

South Tyneside Adult Recovery Service (STARS) – drug and alcohol treatment service:

<http://stadultrecoveryservice.co.uk/> or tel: 0191 917 1160

Young people's drug and alcohol service (Matrix):

www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/35495/Matrix-drug-and-alcohol-service

or tel: 0191 497 5637

Drug and alcohol support services:

<https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/57977/Drug-and-alcohol-misuse>

FRANK is a national helpline that offers free confidential advice and information about drugs 24 hours a day. Contact FRANK online at <https://www.talktofrank.com/>, call 0300 123 6600 or text 82111

Drink line provides free and confidential advice on any aspect of drinking. Call 0300 123 1110

Release is a confidential helpline offering advice on drug use and legal issues. See <https://www.release.org.uk/>, call 020 73242989 or email ask@release.org.uk

Adfam provides support to people working with family members who are affected by drugs and alcohol. See <https://adfam.org.uk/> or call 020 381 79410

Alcoholics Anonymous provides support for people who want to stop drinking. See <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>, call 0800 917 7650 or email help@aamail.org

NECA (North East Council on Addictions) offers counselling, groupwork and ongoing support for users, family and friends. See <https://www.neca.co.uk/>

SMART Recovery UK – Self-Help Addiction Recovery Programmes from UK Smart Recovery include recovery from alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling and more. See <https://smartrecovery.org.uk/>

The new DrinkCoach website is a seamless end-to-end service which offers identification and brief advice as well as the tools, both free and paid for, to track and change one's drinking - all in one place. See <https://drinkcoach.org.uk/drinkcoach-app>

NHS Services – The NHS provides addiction support across England. You can search for local services here - <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/find-alcohol-addiction-support-services/> .

PROPS North East – Supports families affected by substance use. Located in North Shields. Call 0191 226 3440 or visit their website - <https://props.org.uk/>.

Gateshead Recovery Partnership – Offers integrated drug and alcohol services. Call 0191 594 7821 or check here - <https://www.changegrowlive.org/service/gateshead-recovery-partnership>.

Lifeline Harm Reduction Service – Based in Newcastle. More details here - <https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/services/drug-alcohol-service-addictions-services-newcastle/> .

Wear Recovery – based in Sunderland
<https://www.sunderlandhealthandwellnesshub.nhs.uk/2025/05/12/wear-recovery-drug-and-alcohol-support/>

Youth Drug and Alcohol Project – Located in Sunderland. Call **0191 520 5552** or visit here - <https://www.sunderlandhealthandwellnesshub.nhs.uk/2025/06/05/youth-drug-and-alcohol-project/>.

Support across Middlesbrough - <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/drug-and-alcohol-support/>

Occupational Health:
Occupational.HealthReferrals@southtyneside.gov.uk
0191 4246370 / 0191 4246371

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure -
<https://intranet.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/20894/Disciplinary-Policy-and-Procedure>

Driving at Work Guidance Procedures -
<https://intranet.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/23016/Driving-at-work-guidance-procedures>

7. Legal Requirements

The legal requirements under this procedure which South Tyneside Council must comply with are:

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974: Employers have a general duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. This includes managing risks associated with drug and alcohol misuse. Employees are also required to take reasonable care of themselves and others who could be affected by what they do at work.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999: Employers to assess the risks to the health and safety of its employees.

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971: This act makes it illegal to possess, supply, or produce controlled drugs without proper authorisation.

Road Traffic Act 1988: This act includes provisions related to driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Employers should be aware of these regulations, especially if employees are required to drive as part of their job.

Equality Act 2010: Employers must ensure that their policies do not discriminate against employees based on protected characteristics, such as disability. This includes providing reasonable adjustments for employees with substance dependence issues.

Data Protection Act 2018: When conducting drug and alcohol testing, employers must handle personal data in accordance with data protection laws. This includes ensuring confidentiality and obtaining informed consent from employees.

8. Important Definitions

After Hours Call Out refers to the occurrence of an abnormal operating event requiring attendance by an employee outside of normal shift or work hours. An abnormal operating event could be an equipment failure, a spill, an alarm condition or any other event that means the site is not operating normally and requires intervention to return the site to normal operating condition. This also includes out of hours repairs.

Drug means any drug, chemical or agent that may be used to alter the way the body or mind functions in such a manner that an employee may no longer be fit for duty.

Alcohol means the intoxicating agent in beverage alcohol, ethyl alcohol or other low molecular weight alcohols including methyl or isopropyl alcohol.

Fit for Duty means being able to safely and acceptably perform all assigned duties and any task under the working conditions present at the time that the task is to be completed without any limitations (including fatigue, drowsiness or loss of mental capacity) due to the use or after-effects of drugs, alcohol, or medication.

Medication means drugs that require a personal prescription from a treating physician and any over the counter drugs.

Non-negative result means that the initial screening test detected the presence of a substance, but it hasn't yet been confirmed as a positive result.

Substance means drugs, alcohol and medication, collectively, or any one or more of them.

Spiking refers to the act of adding drugs or alcohol to someone's drink or body without their knowledge or consent.

9. Equality and Diversity Statement

South Tyneside Council is committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity. An equality check for this policy was carried out in May 2025. No equality implications were identified in this policy.

Policy Approved by: Policy Review Group

Last updated / reviewed: September 2025

Date issued: October 2025

Date of next review: September 2026