

# **LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE**

## **POLICY FOR DEALING WITH ALCOHOL/DRUG MISUSE**

This document applies to all staff of the School, whether academic or professional support.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Whilst most people who drink alcohol do so in moderation and with sensible regard for the consequences, there is a significant minority whose drinking brings harm to their own lives or the lives of family, friends and colleagues. Similarly, the use of drugs can disrupt such relationships. At work, it can result in sickness absence, reduced efficiency, and accidents, resulting in unacceptable performance and productivity.
- 1.2 The School recognises that the misuse of alcohol and drugs can be a medical condition and should be treated as such. The same provisions and allowance for treatment will be made as for other illnesses.
- 1.3 This policy is intended to help those with an alcohol or drug problem to be restored to health quickly, to the benefit of themselves, their colleagues and the School, and to return to an acceptable pattern of working.
- 1.4 The School has drawn up this policy in consultation with its recognised trades unions. It applies to all staff without exception, regardless of age, sex, race or status within the School.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy, alcohol dependence is defined as:

“The habitual drinking of intoxicating liquor by an employee, whereby the employee’s ability to perform his/her duties is impaired, or his/her attendance at work is interfered with, or s/he endangers the safety of others”

- 2.2 For the purposes of this policy, drug dependence is defined as:

“The habitual taking of drugs by an employee other than drugs prescribed as medication, whereby the employee’s ability to perform his/her duties is impaired, or his/her attendance at work is interfered with, or s/he endangers the safety of others.

### **3. THE POLICY**

- 3.1 The School will assist all members of staff to identify potential alcohol or drug problems and will encourage staff to seek help at an early stage. Attempts to conceal a colleague's problem may be misguided and counter-productive, as it is important to recognise and treat a condition at an early stage when help may stand a better chance of success.
- 3.2 Staff who consider that they may have a problem will be encouraged to seek help and treatment voluntarily, and appropriate medical advice from the School's Occupational Health Service will be offered in the strictest confidence.
- 3.3 Whilst alcohol/drug dependence does not excuse poor work performance or misconduct it may be treated as a mitigating factor, and disciplinary procedures may be suspended whilst opportunity is taken to seek diagnosis and, if necessary, treatment (see section 6).

### **4. ACTION**

- 4.1 Any member of staff who is concerned that s/he may have a dependence on alcohol or drugs is encouraged to seek help and advice from their General Practitioner. If the School believes that an employee is dependent on alcohol or drugs it may require that employee to attend an interview with the School's Occupational Health Doctor. The Occupational Health Doctor will then provide the School with a report on the employee's condition and advice regarding treatment strategy and his/her suitability to fulfil his/her responsibilities to the School.
- 4.2 If it is shown that the working environment is contributing to a dependency problem, then the School will take all reasonable actions to ameliorate such problems.
- 4.3 It is hoped that any member of the School who believes that a colleague has a drink or drug dependency problem will encourage him/her to seek professional help.
- 4.4 Someone whose dependency on drink or drugs has come to the attention of a Head of Faculty/Department or some other School officer-possibly through difficulties at work - will, in the first place, be encouraged to discuss his/her dependency problems and also, if appropriate, be advised to seek medical assistance.
- 4.5 Confidentiality will be ensured at all times, as far as possible.
- 4.6 An individual has the right to be accompanied by a School trade union representative or a colleague in discussions relating to alcohol or drug dependency.

## **5. TREATMENT**

- 5.1 The School will regard anyone seeking help as having a health problem and will cooperate to enable appropriate help/treatment to be obtained.
- 5.2 Treatment may involve regular sessions with a specialist counsellor, support sessions with former alcohol/drugs misusers, attendance on recognised programmes, or short-term hospitalisation in an alcohol/drugs unit. A list of organisations set up to help those with alcohol and/or drugs-related problems is given at **Annex A**.
- 5.3 The School will treat reasonable absences for advice and treatment for dependence on alcohol or drugs within its normal sick leave provisions, provided the person concerned regularly informs the School of progress and genuinely attempts to overcome the dependency problem. Normal employment and pension rights will be protected whilst treatment is in progress.
- 5.4 Staff will be returned, as far as possible, to their normal duties after treatment, depending on their ability to perform those duties or on the consequent risk of relapse after a return to those duties. If a return to normal duties is not considered to be appropriate, every effort will be made to redeploy the member of staff, although retirement on the grounds of ill-health or termination of employment may be the only suitable courses of action. Each case will be treated on its merits and decisions will be made only after the fullest advice is sought.

## **6. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

- 6.1 If a possible alcohol/drug related problem comes to light through behaviour which could result in disciplinary action the above procedures will apply. The employee has the right to refuse the offer of help and such a refusal will not, in itself, be a matter for disciplinary action. However, staff refusing to undertake treatment, when appropriate, will be advised that unacceptable performance or behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with normal disciplinary procedures.
- 6.2 If a problem comes to light through performance and/or behaviour which is subject to disciplinary action and the member of staff chooses to accept referral for assessment and possible treatment, the School will suspend such action dependent on the employee:
  - 6.2.1 complying with the referral and meeting with the School's Occupational Health Doctor for assessment of the problem;
  - 6.2.2 co-operating with any recommended programme of support/treatment which will help him/her to overcome the problem;
  - 6.2.3 agreeing to the treatment agency liaising with the School's Occupational Health Doctor with regard to the level of attendance for and co-operation with treatment, and

- 6.2.4 improving work performance and/or behaviour to an acceptable level within a time scale agreed by the member of staff and the Head of Faculty or other appropriate officer.
- 6.3 A member of staff referred for assessment who is subsequently shown not to have an alcohol/drug dependency problem or does not comply with the above conditions may be subject to disciplinary action in the usual way.
- 6.4 Where a member of staff who agrees to accept treatment subsequently fails to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and/or behaviour, a further offer of help may be made. Each case will be fully reviewed, and a suitable course of action followed, although this may include consideration of retirement on the grounds of ill-health or termination of employment.
- 6.5 It is acknowledged that relapse is a possibility, and in such cases a further offer of help may be made, based on the individual merits of the case. Where necessary, medical advice will be sought in an attempt to ascertain how much more treatment/rehabilitation time is likely to be required for a full recovery.
- 6.6 All agreements entered into under this policy will be confirmed in writing as soon as is practicable and reasonable.

## ANNEX A

### POINTS OF CONTACT

#### **The Gower Street Practice**

**(the School's occupational health service)**

20 Gower Street  
London WC1E  
6DP Tel: 020  
7636 7628

#### **Al Anon**

(Support group for families/friends of problem drinkers)  
Wednesdays at 19 30 hrs  
6 Little Russell Street  
London WC1A 2HR

Tel: 020 7403 0888  
[www.al-non.org.uk](http://www.al-non.org.uk)

#### **Alcohol Concern**

64 Leman Street  
London E1 8EU

Tel: 020 7264 0510  
[www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

#### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

National Helpline Number: 0845 769 7555 (calls charged at local rate)  
[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

#### **CASA Alcohol Services**

55 Fortess Road  
Kentish Town  
London NW5 1AD

Tel: 020 7485 1945

#### **Alcohol Advisory Service**

309 Grays Inn Road  
London WC1X 8QF

Tel: 020 7530 5900

## **London Drug Policy Forum**

C/o City Hall  
Guildhall  
PO BOX270  
London EC2P 2EJ

Tel: 020 7332 3084  
[ldpf@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:ldpf@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## **Addiction Advisor**

Tel: 0845 003 8908  
[www.addictionadvisor.co.uk](http://www.addictionadvisor.co.uk)

## **Turning Point**

Standon House  
21 Mansell Street  
London E1 8AA

Tel: 020 7481 7600  
E: [info@turning-point.co.uk](mailto:info@turning-point.co.uk)  
[www.turning-point.co.uk](http://www.turning-point.co.uk)