

The National Alcohol Harm and Reduction Strategy consultation document has recently been brought to my attention in the context of a leaflet that the Chartered Management Institute produced and published in December 2002.

To meet your deadline for response of 15 January, please find below comments that are relevant to two particular areas raised in the paper. I also attach for your information our leaflet: "Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace - Guidance for Managers".

This leaflet was developed based on responses to research fieldwork carried out in September 2002 among 4,000 individual Institute members, drawn from all management levels, sectors and size of organisation. The full research findings will be published at the end of March 2003 and we will be happy to send on a copy. However, if it would be helpful for your project to have an earlier sighting of the full results, we would be happy to arrange a meeting.

We are concerned that the role of employers and managers has not always received sufficient attention when considering national alcohol and drug strategies, and believe that raising awareness of this issue among managers and providing practical help on how to tackle problems in the workplace, could have a significant impact.

Specific comments in relation the consultation document:

The economic costs and benefits of alcohol

Question 56: Economic Costs

With reference to question 56 of the consultation paper, the economic costs of alcohol misuse to business are considerable in terms of lost productivity, reduced performance, and the health and safety of staff.

In 2002, the Chartered Management Institute carried out its own research among members looking in particular at the business impact of substance abuse and identified a number of key problems that can arise where employees are misusing substances:

- \* Lower productivity
- \* Increased staff turnover
- \* Lower profit margins
- \* Increase absenteeism
- \* Loss of clients
- \* Damage to organisation's reputation
- \* Accidents and other breaches of health and safety requirements
- \* Employee theft
- \* Lower staff morale
- \* Workplace bullying
- \* Increased stress levels

However, to date there has not been substantive research into the cost to employers of alcohol misuse. Various organisations have made overall estimates of the annual cost to UK industry, and this ranges from between £800m and £3.5bn.

The US has carried out more detailed studies into how drugs and alcohol misuse affects an employee's judgement and their ability to perform their duties. US studies show that substance abusers are 33 per cent less

productive, three times as likely to be late, four times as likely to hurt themselves or others at work, and ten times as likely to miss work (source - US National Institute of Drug Abuse).

Although businesses may feel that this is an issue that does not concern them, figures show that 75 per cent of drinkers regarded as having a problem are in employment, as are 25 per cent of those actively seeking help for a drug problem (Drink and Drugs: The Cost to Employers, Alcohol Concern).

Question 61: Workplace initiatives designed to tackle alcohol misuse

It is important that employers and managers are aware of the potential problems arising from alcohol misuse and are confident that they have the background knowledge and policies in place to deal with individual cases.

Drug and alcohol misuse should be seen as a health problem and the employee should be supported as far as possible, with disciplinary action being used only as a last resort.

The Institute's recent research provided evidence that the most effective way of achieving this is to introduce and maintain a comprehensive, unequivocal and effective drugs and alcohol policy that is established at the top and known throughout the organisation.

However, less than half of managers surveyed have a drug, alcohol or combined policy in place in their organisation. Despite the fact that one in five managers believe that alcohol misuse has increased in their organisation over the past few years.

To address this rising issue of concern, in December the Institute published advice and information on how to manage these issues. Attached, is the new set of guidelines to raise awareness of the dangers of substance misuse in the workplace and to encourage employers to develop a clear company policy. These are now also available on the website, as [www.managers.org.uk/drugs](http://www.managers.org.uk/drugs).

These guidelines are also complemented by a step by step guide on how to construct and implement a policy, including working examples provided by organisations that have effective policies in place.

I hope this is useful. I look forward to hearing from you if you require any further information.

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