



'Spotlight on...' learning toolkits aim to raise awareness and drive change. The toolkits provide resources including guidance, case studies and best practice examples from across the industry and beyond to help the construction industry to address these issues and raise their standards in these important areas of concern.



CONSIDERATE  
CONSTRUCTORS  
SCHEME

# Spotlight on...

## drugs and alcohol

BEST PRACTICE  
HUB



## Spotlight on...

drugs and alcohol

# 'Spotlight on... drugs and alcohol' aims to raise awareness of the health and safety risks associated with this topic and educate the sector's workforce about how drugs and alcohol impact upon the construction industry.

Maintaining a safe working environment is of utmost importance for any employer; this not only applies to the workforce, but also the surrounding public and anybody else who may be affected. The need for attention and consideration could not be more of a priority than within the already safety-conscious construction industry.

It goes without saying that the influence of drugs and alcohol pose huge safety risks for the industry; the slightest lapse in attention or focus could cause serious consequences, particularly in a working environment where heavy machinery and vehicles are used. For many people, consuming alcohol outside working hours is a typical part of a normal lifestyle and usually does not create any serious problems. Enjoying a few drinks within the legal limit in leisure time should not be condemned, but the after effects must be kept in mind when regarding an individual's physical and mental capabilities.

It is important to understand that drugs and alcohol can affect the psychological and physical state of wellbeing, significantly diminishing the ability to perform at a responsible level. The effects of drugs and alcohol can vary depending on the particular substance taken. However, the most common influences that can affect an individual in a working environment are as follows:

- Impaired awareness including vision and hearing
- Reduced concentration and ability to focus
- Diminished judgement and decision making
- Compromised balance and coordination

Each of these can directly compromise both the body's mental and physical ability, greatly intensifying the chance of a hazard occurring. It is common knowledge when working in a construction environment that the individual's actions do not just affect themselves, but can also impact those around them.

It is essential to keep in mind that it is not just recreational drugs that can pose a serious risk. Prescribed drugs may also influence an individual in various ways, which can have serious consequences in the workplace. Fundamentally, any form of drug that you may not routinely take holds the possibility of unexpected side effects.

The issue of drugs and alcohol does not just pose a health and safety hazard; the possession, production and supply of illegal drugs are criminal offences and have no place in the working environment. Whilst employers and fellow colleagues should be aware of the signs of being under the influence, they should also be vigilant of any illegal activity taking place on premises.

Alongside the risks to health and safety and potential criminal activity, the impact of drugs and alcohol should be clearly identified and addressed. The impact of drugs and alcohol can be categorised down to four core issues:

1. Injuries and fatalities
2. Absenteeism and dismissal
3. Inefficiency
4. Criminal activity

## Spotlight on...

### drugs and alcohol

#### FACTS AND FIGURES

It can be difficult to determine exactly what extent the industry is affected by drugs and alcohol. The following facts have been identified:

- **20-30%** of workplace accidents can be associated with alcohol in safety-critical industries such as construction (NHS, 2006)
- **27%** of employers say drug misuse is a problem at work while **60%** have experienced problems due to staff drinking alcohol (Alcohol Concern, 2010)
- **33%** of employees admit to being at work with a hangover from the night before, which they accept impacts directly on their own productivity and safety (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2015)
- **200,000** people every day turn up to work hungover (European Alcohol and Health Forum, 2011)
- **17 million** working days a year are lost in England due to alcohol-related sickness (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2010)
- **3-5%** of all absences each year are due to alcohol (Trade Union Congress, 2010)
- UK industry loses **£7.3 billion** a year to alcohol-related sickness absence (Cabinet Office, 2010)
- **3 million** deaths a year are a result of harmful drugs and alcohol use (World Health Organisation, 2015).

In order to gain a more up to date and direct representation of how the industry feels about the issue, the Scheme gathered information through an industry survey. Over 1,200 participants responded, proving the subject was clearly an important issue.

The following results were identified:

- **59%** agreed there is an issue in the industry related to drugs and alcohol
- **39%** admitted the issue of drugs or alcohol could be better tackled in their workplace
- **65%** admitted they have never been tested for drugs and alcohol
- **35%** have noticed their colleagues under the influence of drugs and alcohol

- **25%** agreed drugs or alcohol affected them at work through tiredness
- **23%** agreed it affected them through decreased attention during work
- **19%** agreed the affects made them less productive at work.

Responses also showed a positive approach was being taken to tackle the issue, with sites providing information on drugs and alcohol through toolbox talks, site inductions and resources such as posters. Alcohol policies are often clearly displayed and many companies take a zero tolerance approach to drugs and alcohol.

While it is clear that the industry is aware of this issue, there is evidence to suggest that more can be done, and in some cases, needs to be done. There is now a greater requirement for more testing to be conducted both on site and in office locations. Although testing raises a highly sensitive subject of privacy and legalities, some believe it is the only way to properly regulate the issue, with a general consensus that random testing is beneficial.

Any initiatives such as random testing should focus equally on all personnel within a company, including site and office based employees, not simply operatives. Also, like many other subjects in the industry that require resources and manpower to tackle, it is smaller companies which generally have a more difficult time implementing such a comprehensive and thorough approach.

It is crucial that testing is carried out legally and correctly for any company which decides to include drugs and alcohol testing within their policy. Testing should only be carried out by a professional testing agency or a fully certified and accredited employee. A professional agency will send specialised staff to visit the premises and carry out testing, as well as produce results. An accredited employee is a member of staff who is qualified under a professional agency to perform testing for their own workforce.

It is also important to recognise testing may not be included in every company's drugs and alcohol policy and therefore the workforce cannot be subject to testing if it is not stated in this document.

## Spotlight on...

drugs and alcohol

## Law and legislation

The subject of drugs and alcohol does not just pose a risk to health and safety, it also raises legal concerns.

The following law and legislation below highlights exactly how issues within this topic can cross over into a legal matter:

### MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1971

This Act regulates the unlawful production, supply and possession of illegally controlled substances unless prescribed by a doctor. It establishes that it is illegal for an employer to knowingly permit the production, supply and possession of such substances on their premises.

For government guidance on the act, visit <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/38/contents>

### HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974

Employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their workforce where practical. It is possible for the employer to be prosecuted if they knowingly allow a member of the workforce to operate under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol that could place themselves or others at risk.

For government guidance on the act, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

### ROAD TRAFFIC ACT 1988

Any employee under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol who is unfit to drive and/or be in charge of a vehicle is guilty of an offence. It is specified to be an offence when alcohol concentration is above the current prescribed limit.

For government guidance on the act, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

### TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

It is a criminal offence for employees to be unfit for work whilst under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and working on transport systems such as railways. It is also an offence for transport system operators to not attempt to prevent the above offence from being committed.

For government guidance on the act, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

### PROVISION AND USE OF WORK EQUIPMENT REGULATIONS 1998

Employers are required to assess the additional risk to the health and safety of the individual and/or others when operating work equipment.

For government guidance on the act, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

## Spotlight on...

drugs and alcohol

### HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998

The rights of the individual must be balanced against another in order to determine the safety and protection of the community. A drugs and alcohol policy is justified where the safety of the public is at risk.

For government guidance on the act, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

### PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES ACT 2016

Under this Act, it is illegal to supply, produce, import or possess substances capable of exhibiting psychoactive effects. Psychoactive substances might include depressants, stimulants, opiates and psychedelics.

For government guidance on the act, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

### MISUSE OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL REGULATIONS 2001

These regulations define the classes of people who are authorised to possess, manufacture or supply controlled drugs. This is important in preventing the malpractice of prescription drugs such as codeine, steroids and morphine.

For government guidance on the act, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)





## External resources

There are many awareness campaigns and resources dedicated to the subject of drugs and alcohol. These examples include a collection of useful and important information gathered from various organisations and databases.

### ORGANISATIONS

**Brake** runs simultaneous national and regional campaigns through the year, focusing on various aspects of road safety.

<http://www.brake.org.uk/>

**British Liver Trust** is currently running a national awareness campaign '**Love Your Liver**'. This provides advice on how to maintain a healthy liver through three simple steps.

<https://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/our-work/love-your-liver/love-liver-health-screener/love-liver-health-screener/>

**D.tec International** works with organisations to provide non-intrusive Drug and Alcohol (D&A) screening services. They are also available to offer guidance and advice to employers regarding D&A policy development.

<https://www.dtecinternational.com/drug-testing>

**Drinkaware** provides research, reports and resources on drinking habits and lifestyles. The Considerate Constructors Scheme and Drinkaware have come together in partnership to create the Drinkaware in Construction programme to help people understand their relationship with alcohol better.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/drinkaware-in-construction/>

**HSE** provides free resources and information regarding drugs and alcohol in the workplace that focus both on the employee and the employer. Covering key aspects such as impacts and effects, what to look for, policy etc.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/>

**NHS Healthier Families** offers a variety of information and resources including tips to reduce drinking habits and lead a healthier lifestyle.

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/>

**Public Health England (PHE)** released the 'Health matters: harmful drinking and alcohol dependence' document in January 2016. This resource provides a fully comprehensive base of facts, trends and essential information around the subject in relation to health and safety.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-harmful-drinking-and-alcohol-dependence/health-matters-harmful-drinking-and-alcohol-dependence>

**Synlab** work with employers to provide drugs and alcohol testing services.

<https://drugandalcohol.synlab.co.uk/>

**Talk to Frank** maintains a wide range of services including information on drugs, advice to reduce the harm, and support for confidential counselling and treatment.

<http://www.talktofrank.com/drugs-a-z>



## Spotlight on...

drugs and alcohol

**THINK!** provides information to encourage safer behaviour on the roads by working collaboratively with organisations and law enforcement for maximum reach and impact.

<https://www.think.gov.uk/>

**Trade Union Congress (TUC)** includes an extensive literature source on drug testing in the workplace covering aspects such as types of testing, effectiveness, law and legislation and more.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/drugs-and-alcohol/guides-and-reports-reps/drug-testing-workplace>

**UK Government** provides official guidelines and support on the drug testing procedure in the workplace. Such information proves useful for both the employer carrying out procedures correctly and also the employee to understand their rights.

<https://www.gov.uk/monitoring-work-workers-rights/overview>

### WHAT IS THE INDUSTRY DOING?

The **Considerate Constructors Scheme** offers a drugs and alcohol policy template.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/entries/drugs-and-alcohol-policy-template/>

**Robertson Group** have developed a **video** which highlights what they have done to improve Drugs and Alcohol testing on their sites and the support they need to tackle this major concerning issue which impacts the whole industry.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/entries/case-study-robertson-mandatory-drugs-and-alcohol-testing/>

### WHAT IS HAPPENING OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM?

**Drugs and Alcohol Ireland** provides key information about the scale of the issue in Ireland, including statistics, factsheets and reports.

<http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/>

**Health and Safety Authority Ireland** provide a useful information sheet about the topic of 'Intoxicants at Work', including in safety-critical industries.

[http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications\\_and\\_Forms/Publications/Occupational\\_Health/Intoxicants\\_at\\_Work\\_Information\\_Sheet\\_.pdf](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Occupational_Health/Intoxicants_at_Work_Information_Sheet_.pdf)

**Recovered** is a North American organisation providing free resources and information. The **'Alcohol and other drugs in the workplace' fact sheet** provides a list of eye-opening facts and figures on the issue across the United States.

<https://recovered.org/addiction/drugs-and-alcohol-in-the-workplace>

**Sustainable Built Environment National Research Centre (SBEnrc)** is an Australian based organisation focusing on the environmental, social and economic sustainability areas of the industry. 'Safety Impacts of Alcohol & Other Drugs in Construction' focuses on how the effects of drugs and alcohol can impact site safety using recorded data from the industry.

<http://sbenrc.com.au/research-programs/2-1-safety-impacts-of-alcohol-and-other-drugs-in-construction/>

## Examples of best practice

The Scheme aims to improve the image of construction through sharing best practice with the industry. Below are a number of best practice examples that have been either witnessed by the Scheme's Monitors on their site visits or submitted by members of the industry themselves:

- A comprehensive testing regime is accompanied by toolbox talks and support structures to raise awareness of drugs and alcohol and help those struggling with addiction.
- The gateman was equipped with a breathalyser to ensure all drivers are capable to drive.
- During Ramadan, the site asked the testing company to bring saliva kits as well as urine testers to accommodate for workers who may be fasting.
- The drugs and alcohol and testing policies were extended to cover not just on-site operatives but also those travelling to and from site and working in areas connected to the works.
- Provided access to NHS information about addiction, including how to recognise it and when and where to get help.
- The site participated in Alcohol Awareness Week to encourage people to consider how alcohol impacts their lives and the lives of their loved ones.
- The site manager devised a poster illustrating the sugar content of alcoholic drinks to make people think twice about their alcohol consumption.
- After an operative failed a drug test, they were removed from site and enrolled on a rehabilitation programme to help them quit, with the opportunity for the individual to be re-employed on site after completing the programme.
- The site appointed drugs and alcohol ambassadors who would look out for signs of abuse and provide help and guidance.
- The site provided drugs and alcohol rehabilitation for some local homeless people.

To view all Best Practice Hub entries relating to the 'Spotlight on... drugs and alcohol' learning toolkit visit: <https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/tag/drugs-and-alcohol/>



## Case Studies

The industry has acknowledged and reacted to the issue of drugs and alcohol for some time now. However, as the environment changes the industry is also changing its approach to tackling the issue.

 <p><b>A-one+</b> Integrated Highway Services <small>A CH2M / COLAS / COSTAIN COMPANY</small></p>	<p><b>A-one+ Integrated Highways Services</b> focuses their efforts to tackle drugs and alcohol through a Road Safety Week initiative. Educating the workforce on the effects and impact of drug and drink driving to reduce the risk in and around busy transportation pathways and high speed traffic.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/A-One-2.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/A-One-2.pdf</a></p>
 <p><b>AGRIYORK 400</b></p>	<p><b>AgriYork 400 Ltd</b> provide a detailed explanation of drug testing and the laws behind it that affect the employee.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Agriyork-400.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Agriyork-400.pdf</a></p>
 <p><b>ALCOHOL CHANGE UK</b></p>	<p><b>Alcohol Change</b> offer an extensive library of information on alcohol in the workplace including facts, tips and advice. The charity also highlights its awareness campaigns aiming to reduce the risks of alcohol.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Alcohol-Change.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Alcohol-Change.pdf</a></p>
 <p><b>Ardmore</b></p>	<p><b>Ardmore</b> outlines its drugs and alcohol policy including a random testing procedure.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Ardmore.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Ardmore.pdf</a></p>
 <p><b>ballymore.</b></p>	<p><b>Ballymore</b> highlights their range of awareness techniques aiming to tackle the issue of drugs and alcohol.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Ballymore.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Ballymore.pdf</a></p>
 <p><b>+ BOWMER KIRKLAND</b></p>	<p><b>Bowmer &amp; Kirkland's</b> drug and alcohol policy outlines the effects on the individual both short and long term.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Bowmer-and-Kirkland.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Bowmer-and-Kirkland.pdf</a></p>



## Spotlight on...

drugs and alcohol

	<p><b>DrugWise</b> presents a full list of definitions on the most commonly used drugs found in the industry. This includes description, effects and the risk when used in the workplace.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/DrugWise.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/DrugWise.pdf</a></p>
	<p><b>Galliford Try</b> highlights and explains how they implemented a robust drugs and alcohol policy and how they performed tests.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Galliford-Try.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Galliford-Try.pdf</a></p>
	<p><b>Interserve</b> established tool box talks including a host of facts and figures on drugs and alcohol. Their policy also offers a range of resources such as posters and advisory services.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Interserve.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Interserve.pdf</a></p>
	<p><b>John F Hunt</b> highlights and explains the full spectrum of testing along with disciplinary offences and actions.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Farrans-DNA-APPROVED.pdf">ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Farrans-DNA-APPROVED.pdf</a></p>
	<p><b>John Sisk &amp; Son Ltd</b> acknowledge the risk that substance abuse, including drugs and alcohol can have whilst working on site and have developed and implemented a Substance Abuse policy. The Sisk Temple Quay, Phase 3 project put in place a site specific initiative to combat this issue.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/John-Sisk.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/John-Sisk.pdf</a></p>
	<p><b>Mick George</b> showcases their Safety Improvement Campaign which highlights their testing process.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Mick-George.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Mick-George.pdf</a></p>
	<p><b>Mulalley &amp; Co Ltd</b> provides an overview of their drug and alcohol policy including methods such as raising awareness through inductions, tool box talks and site posters. Also highlighting their FORS accreditation to improve safety on the roads.</p> <p><a href="https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Mulalley.pdf">https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Mulalley.pdf</a></p>

**Spotlight on...**

drugs and alcohol

**What can you do?**

There is no doubt the industry has made considerable progress with tackling the issue of drugs and alcohol over the years.

The topic can also touch on sensitive areas regarding implementing regulations governing on how an individual should act outside of work. However, the primary concern is and always will be to safeguard the workforce’s health and safety in one of the most accident and risk intensive industries. Below you will find advice on what you can do to better organise and prepare a strategy for tackling the issue of drugs and alcohol:

**1. A DRUGS AND ALCOHOL POLICY SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED AT A COMPANY-WIDE LEVEL**

In order to establish a firm, direct and informed approach to the issue, a policy should be in place. This ensures all employees understand the procedures and regulations associated with the issue, as well as providing a clear and accessible direction for when action is required. Drugs and alcohol is a serious concern to health and safety and should therefore fall alongside other policies in this area.

**2. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS SHOULD BE EASILY ACCESSIBLE**

Promoting the topic through visible reminders is effective in maintaining a sense of awareness that leads to positive action and thinking. Initiatives should include staff meetings, resources such as posters, handouts, information summaries and directions to other sources of information, such as this learning toolkit. Education is the most effective tool to tackle the issue.

**3. SUPPORT SYSTEMS SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AND APPROACHABLE**

An employee that feels they are cared for and has options is more likely to take action. Establish an environment where support is easily accessible and the individual is ensured confidentiality. An open door policy and offering support internally is a priority, as well as having a direct channel to refer externally if necessary. It should be encouraged that coming

forward and managing the issue is the right thing to do for the workforce.

**4. ENCOURAGE AN OPEN ENVIRONMENT**

All employees should feel they can talk to someone about any concerns or personal issues at their workplace. It is important to encourage an environment where there is a focus to achieve solutions first, rather than taking disciplinary actions without any attempts of support.

**5. TESTING**

Workforce testing is not a legal requirement for every company to comply with. However, it is advised to integrate some level of testing within the overall drugs and alcohol policy. This ensures there is a formal and controlled procedure that can provide factual results and therefore support the decision to take the necessary action(s) with greater accuracy. The presence of potential testing also maintains a firm reminder to the workforce of the consequences of not taking the issue of drugs and alcohol seriously.

As well as the information above, it is also advised to use the ‘External resources’ section, which offers guidance and resources from other organisations and companies that cover the full spectrum of the topic.

The Scheme will continue to update this page as new examples are identified. If you would like to share how your company is addressing drugs and alcohol, contact the Scheme by emailing [enquiries@ccsbestpractice.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccsbestpractice.org.uk).