

Spotlight on...

drugs and alcohol

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The Considerate Constructors Scheme's 'Spotlight on...' campaigns focus on different areas associated with improving the image of construction, and raises awareness among registered sites, companies and suppliers about the issues and how to help.

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 sectors' 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.

Considerate Constructors Scheme Chief Executive Edward Hardy said:

"Spotlight on... drugs and alcohol is a must read for everyone. As the Scheme's latest industry survey revealed 59% of respondent's view that there is an issue associated with drugs and alcohol, it is clear action must be taken across the industry to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing across construction sites and companies throughout the UK."

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



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)
- **7 out of the 10** professions with the highest drink or drug driving rates in 2016 were part of the building trade (MoneySuperMarket, 2016)

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.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

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 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.



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 section below highlights legislation which covers the issue of drugs and alcohol:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Human Rights Act 1998

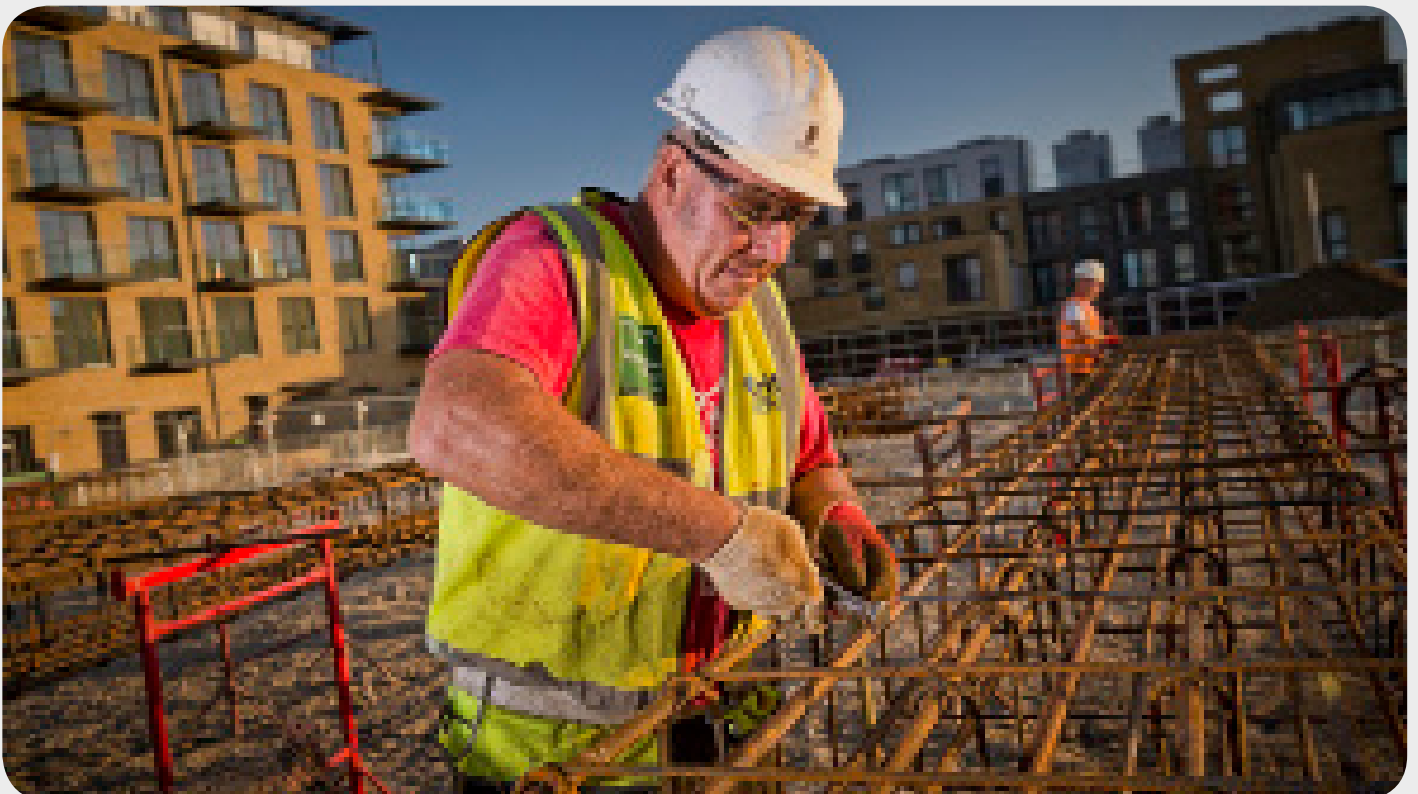
The rights of the individual must be balanced against another in order to determine the safety and protection of the community. A drugs and alcohol policy is justified where the safety of the public is at risk.



External resources

There are many awareness campaigns and resources dedicated to the subject of drugs and alcohol:

- **Alcohol Research UK** published a report in 2016 showcasing the impact of alcohol and changes during the last 30 years of research. Following the company's 'Critical Measures: Next steps in alcohol research and policy' conference, the report shows how the company has helped change alcohol policy and practice to reduce the effects of alcohol harm. Find out more [here](#).
- **Brake** runs simultaneous national and regional campaigns through the year, focusing on various aspects of road safety. One campaign addressing the topic of drugs and alcohol is the **Driving for Zero** campaign. To find more campaigns by Brake click [here](#).
- **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. Take your own personal liver screen test online [here](#).
- **Cancer Research UK** host **Dryathlon** every January, which encourages sponsorship of participants cutting back on drinking alcohol. As well as aiming to get the conversation started on alcohol and the effects, all money raised is then donated to Cancer Research UK and its causes.
- **Drinkaware** provides research, reports and resources on drinking habits and lifestyles. A full host of campaigns are currently running, including '**Pub of the Future**', which is trialling digitally available information about drinking that can be accessed through NFC and QR codes at pubs. To discover more Drinkaware campaigns click [here](#).
- **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. You can download '**Don't mix it**' a guide for employers handbook and '**Drug**



- misuse at work'** a guide for employers, from the HSE website.
- **NHS Change 4 Life** offers a variety of information and resources including tips to reduce drinking habits and lead a healthier lifestyle.
 - **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.
 - **Release** runs multiple campaigns dedicated around the law and legalities side of drugs and alcohol. **'Better Drug Laws Now'** focuses on the decriminalisation of users who require help for their problematic use of drugs rather than criminal conviction. To look at past campaigns click [here](#).
 - **Synlab** work with employers to provide drugs and alcohol testing services. Find out more [here](#).
 - **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. To find a full A-Z list of drugs with the associated risks and laws click [here](#).
 - **THINK!** provides information to encourage safer behaviour on the roads by working collaboratively with organisations and law enforcement for maximum reach and impact. Find further details on both **drug** and **alcohol** related driving.
 - **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. The document can be viewed and/or downloaded [here](#).
 - **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. 'Being monitored at work: workers' rights' can be found [here](#).



What is the industry doing?

- The **Considerate Constructors Scheme** offers a drugs and alcohol policy template which can be downloaded [here](#).
- Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT), which has since merged with **Unite the Union**, produced an information sheet covering drugs and alcohol in the construction workplace. Through simple but precise points, '**Why drugs and alcohol are a workplace issue**' covers the issue, law, advice and employee rights.



What is happening outside the United Kingdom?

- **Construction Owners Association of Alberta (COAA)** is a Canadian organisation offering industry leadership by providing examples of best practice and a forum for communication. The '**Canadian model for providing a safe workplace: alcohol and drug guidelines and work rule**' outlines guidelines, policy, guides and FAQs.
- **Drugs and Alcohol Ireland** provides key information about the scale of the issue in Ireland, including statistics, factsheets and reports.
- The **European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)** provides an extensive and up to date report on the rate and impact of drugs and alcohol across Europe. The 'Use of alcohol and drugs at the workplace' can be downloaded [here](#).
- **Health and Safety Authority Ireland** provide a useful information sheet about the topic of '**Intoxicants at Work**', including in safety-critical industries.
- **National Precast Concrete Association (NPCA)** is a North American organisation providing resources and services to the construction industry in the United States. They have produced an article, '**Zero Tolerance: Illicit Drug and Alcohol Use in the Construction Industry**'.
- **National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD)** 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.
- **SafeWork SA** is a Government body providing workplace health and safety services across South Australia. They provide a **number of resources** focused on drugs and alcohol, including a **toolbox talk**.
- **Sustainable Built Environment National Research Centre (SBEnc)** 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.

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 campaign click [here](#).

Case studies

The following case studies are a collection of useful and important information gathered from various sources including contractors and professional organisations and charities:

Contractors



A-one+ Integrated Highways Services focus 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. To find out more click [here](#).



Ardmore Construction Ltd outlines its drugs and alcohol policy including a random testing procedure and the limits deemed to be considered as a positive result. Find out more [here](#).



Ballymore highlights their range of awareness techniques, which aim to tackle the issue of drugs and alcohol with particular focus on health and safety. The London City Island project sets an example through its range of available resources. To find out more click [here](#).



Bowmer & Kirkland's drug and alcohol policy outlines the short and long-term impact on the individual. Testing procedures are also explained, including an intervention pocket guide and awareness posters. For more information click [here](#).



Interserve has 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. To find out more click [here](#).



Jerram Falkus provides a clear and concise set of construction site rules with particular focus on projects in and around schools. A full set of health and safety concerns are enforced, including attention to drugs and alcohol. To find out more click [here](#).

John F Hunt

John F Hunt Demolition Ltd highlights and explains the full spectrum of testing along with disciplinary offences and actions. Their policy also provides detailed descriptions of prescribed medicines, including potential effects that could cause a safety hazard. Find out more [here](#).



John Sisk & Son Ltd 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 implemented a site-specific initiative to combat this issue. To find out more click [here](#).

MICK GEORGE



Mick George Ltd showcase their Safety Improvement Campaign, highlighting their testing process. Road safety is also enforced through a partnership with the local police. For more information click [here](#).



Mulalley & Co Ltd provides an overview of their drug and alcohol policy, including methods such as raising awareness through inductions, toolbox talks and site posters. They also highlight their FORS accreditation to improve safety on the roads. To find out more click [here](#).

Organisations



AgriYork 400 Ltd provide a detailed explanation of drug testing and the laws behind it that affect the employee. For more information click [here](#).



Alcohol Concern 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. For more information click [here](#).



Constructing Better Health provides a simple and effective summary on drugs and alcohol testing. The document covers why work-related drugs and alcohol testing is important and addresses CBH guidance on testing and outcomes. For more information click [here](#).



DrugWise 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. For more information click [here](#).

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 constructed and 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 awareness 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 campaign. 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 resources provided in the 'External campaigns' section of this campaign, which offers guidance and resources from other organisations and companies that cover the full spectrum of the topic.

The Scheme will continue to update the website with new examples and case studies showing how the industry is tackling this issue.

If you would like to share how your company is addressing drugs and alcohol, please contact the Scheme by emailing enquiries@ccsbestpractice.org.uk