

**ALCOHOL AND DRUG MISUSE POLICY AND  
PROCEDURES  
FOR TEACHERS IN GRANT AIDED SCHOOLS**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The (Employing Authority) has adopted this positive policy on alcohol and drug misuse, in consultation with the recognised teachers' unions, as a constructive and preventative strategy to encourage early identification of alcohol and drug misuse related problems among teachers. It aims to help and support teachers who are experiencing problems as a result of alcohol or drug misuse and to assist those who demonstrate determination to deal with their problem and who cooperate fully with the relevant specialist agency. It is not intended to be an alternative to disciplinary action and should not be abused in this way. The desire to support an individual teacher must also be balanced with the requirement of the principal to comply with his duty of care to pupils and other members of staff.
- 1.2 Alcohol and drug misuse have an affect on the individual's health and wellbeing and can cause a wide range of social problems, affecting family, friends and colleagues. This policy is concerned primarily with the effects of alcohol and drug misuse on conduct at work or on job performance and the career prospects of staff. Alcohol and drug misuse can lead to such problems as:

- Unhealthy role model for children;
- Reduced educational opportunities for children;
- Reduced performance in the classroom;
- Poor judgement;
- Accidents;
- Late start/early end to the working day;
- Absenteeism.

## 2. AIMS OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 The aims of this policy are:
- To encourage and support staff with alcohol or drugs related problems to seek help at an early stage;
  - To provide principals and boards of governors with guidelines to assist them in managing alcohol/drug related problems.
  - To refer staff to appropriate agencies for help;
  - To restore health and productivity;
  - To retain staff;
- 2.2 The policy will apply to all teachers and is intended to:
- Provide a framework for staff who are experiencing alcohol or drug related problems to address those problems and access help and support at an early stage;
  - Reduce and help prevent the incidence of alcohol and drug related work impairment;

- Reduce the personal suffering of staff with alcohol or drug problems and the consequential effect on colleagues;
  - Improve attendance and work performance.
- 2.3 The policy extends to alcohol, illicit drugs, prescription drugs and “over the counter” medication which may be misused. Volatile substances, such as solvents, are also included.

### **3. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 3.1 The (Employing Authority) recognises that alcohol and drug related problems are primarily health and social concerns and staff with such problems require help and treatment.
- 3.2 Alcohol or drug problems are defined as any drinking or taking of drugs, either intermittent or continual, which interferes with a teacher’s work performance in the areas of efficiency, productivity, safety or attendance at work.
- 3.3 Where a teacher is taking prescription drugs or over the counter preparations which could affect performance and/or create a safety risk, he/she should inform the principal.
- 3.4 Where a teacher is invited to attend a meeting to discuss alcohol or drug related problems affecting conduct at work or work performance, he/she will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a teaching colleague from the school. Legal representation is not permitted.
- 3.5 Where a teacher has sought professional help and where there is evidence that he/she is making an effort to deal with his/her alcohol or drug problems, he/she should be granted leave to undergo treatment and such absence for treatment and rehabilitation should be regarded as sick leave. The teacher should be reassured that the contract of employment will be safeguarded during this period.
- 3.6 Where a teacher accepts the opportunity to receive help, but his/her conduct or work performance reverts to the problem level, he/she will have the new situation considered on its merits. If appropriate, a further opportunity to accept and cooperate with help and treatment may be offered.
- 3.7 This policy is limited to the affect of alcohol or drug related problems on the health and/or work performance or conduct of the teacher. It does not apply to teachers who, because of over indulgence in alcohol, or the use of drugs, on random occasions, behave in a manner contrary to the standard of safety and conduct required by the

(Employing Authority). Such instances will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure.

- 3.8 At all stages of the procedure, the teacher should be encouraged to access the staff welfare/occupational health services of the Employing Authority.
- 3.9 It is strongly recommended that principals seek advice, guidance and support from the (Employing Authority's) Staff Welfare Officer in the management of all matters of concern relating to alcohol and drug misuse by staff.
- 3.10 The policy applies to all teaching staff, irrespective of grade or position.
- 3.11 All staff should be given a copy of this agreed policy.

#### **4 CONFIDENTIALITY**

4.1 All discussions with a teacher in connection with this Policy and Procedures will be treated in a confidential manner. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in the following circumstances;

- there is a potential risk of harm to self or others;
- a criminal offence has occurred or may occur;
- there has been a breach of the (Employing Authority's) rules and regulations.

If any of the above occur the Principal must take appropriate action including informing the relevant authorities. The consent of the teacher should be sought, however, if this is not forthcoming, such disclosure shall be made with the knowledge of the teacher involved.

#### **5 PROCEDURES**

##### **5.1 Voluntary Referral**

- 5.1.1 Where a teacher acknowledges that he/she has a problem with alcohol or drugs he/she may approach the principal for advice. Where a teacher does not wish to approach the Principal, he/she may approach the Vice Principal, or other senior member of staff, or a colleague nominated to deal with staff welfare issues, or make direct contact with the (Employing Authority's) Staff Welfare Officer. The teacher should be given encouragement and support and advised of the options available.
- 5.1.2 In the case of a Principal who is experiencing an alcohol or drug related problem he/she may approach the chair of the Board of Governors, or a

governor designated to deal with staff issues, or make direct contact with the (Employing Authority's) Staff Welfare Officer, for advice.

5.1.3 Suggested options for support may include:

- Approaching the (Employing Authority's) Staff Welfare Officer for advice;
- Confidential counselling through Staffcare;
- Directing the teacher to seek treatment from his/her G.P;
- Seeking assessment through a specialist agency e.g. NICAS;
- Seeking an appointment with the (Employing Authority's) Occupational Health Specialist, through the Human Resources Branch.

## 5.2 Management Referral

- 5.2.1 Where a principal has concerns that a teacher may have a problem with alcohol or drug misuse which is affecting conduct at work or work performance and where disciplinary action is considered inappropriate at that time, the Principal should arrange to meet the teacher, informally, to discuss his/her concerns. The Principal should seek the advice and guidance of the (Employing Authority's) Staff Welfare Officer/Human Resources Manager, who may be present at the meeting. The teacher may be accompanied by his/her trade union representative or a teaching colleague from the school.
- 5.2.2 When discussing the problem with the teacher the desire to assist the teacher should be uppermost in the mind of the principal. It is important that accusations are not made, but details of concerns should be clearly stated and openly discussed.
- 5.2.3 The principal may decide at this stage to advise the Chair of the Board of Governors, but confidentiality must be stressed and observed.
- 5.2.4 Where the teacher acknowledges the problem, advice on options for support, as detailed under voluntary referral, should apply (paragraph 5.1.3 refers).
- 5.2.5 Where the problem is denied, the teacher should be reminded of the standards expected within the school and should be advised that, if behaviour which gave rise to the concern is repeated, appropriate management action, which may include disciplinary action, will be taken.
- 5.2.6 A record of the meeting should be kept and preferably signed by those present at the meeting (see appendix I). A copy should be given to the teacher. Records of interviews must be stored in a strictly confidential manner

5.2.7 In many circumstances, and particularly if problems are detected early, support can be provided without the need for absence from work. In other cases absence for treatment/rehabilitation may be necessary.

### **5.3 Absence from work**

5.3.1 Absence from work under this policy may be on any of the following grounds:

- sickness absence, certified by a medical practitioner;
- precautionary suspension on medical grounds. It falls to the (Employing Authority) or principal to take any emergency action required when they have reason to think that a teacher may have become medically unfit to perform teaching duties. This includes the authority to suspend on medical grounds. (Reference DE Circular 1997/16 Physical and Mental Fitness of Teachers to Teach);
- disciplinary suspension on grounds of conduct;
- unauthorised absence, in which case salary will not be paid.

5.3.2 During periods of absence teachers are required to adhere to the procedures laid down in the Managing Attendance at Work Policy.

5.3.3 Teachers are also expected to make use of the support services available (refer to paragraph 5.1.3) and should be actively seeking and co-operating with help and treatment.

### **5.4 Return to work**

5.4.1 Where a teacher has been absent due to medical reasons the (Employing Authority) may require confirmation from Occupational Health as to the teacher's fitness to resume duties. If the teacher is on continuous absence for 3 months or more such assessment is mandatory before a return to work.

5.4.2 Return to work following suspension on grounds of conduct will be in accordance with the provisions of the Disciplinary Procedure.

5.4.3 Occupational Health may advise that a teacher returning to work would benefit from a period of settling back into his/her post. To facilitate this, where necessary, the school should consider a period of flexible working arrangements which may include:

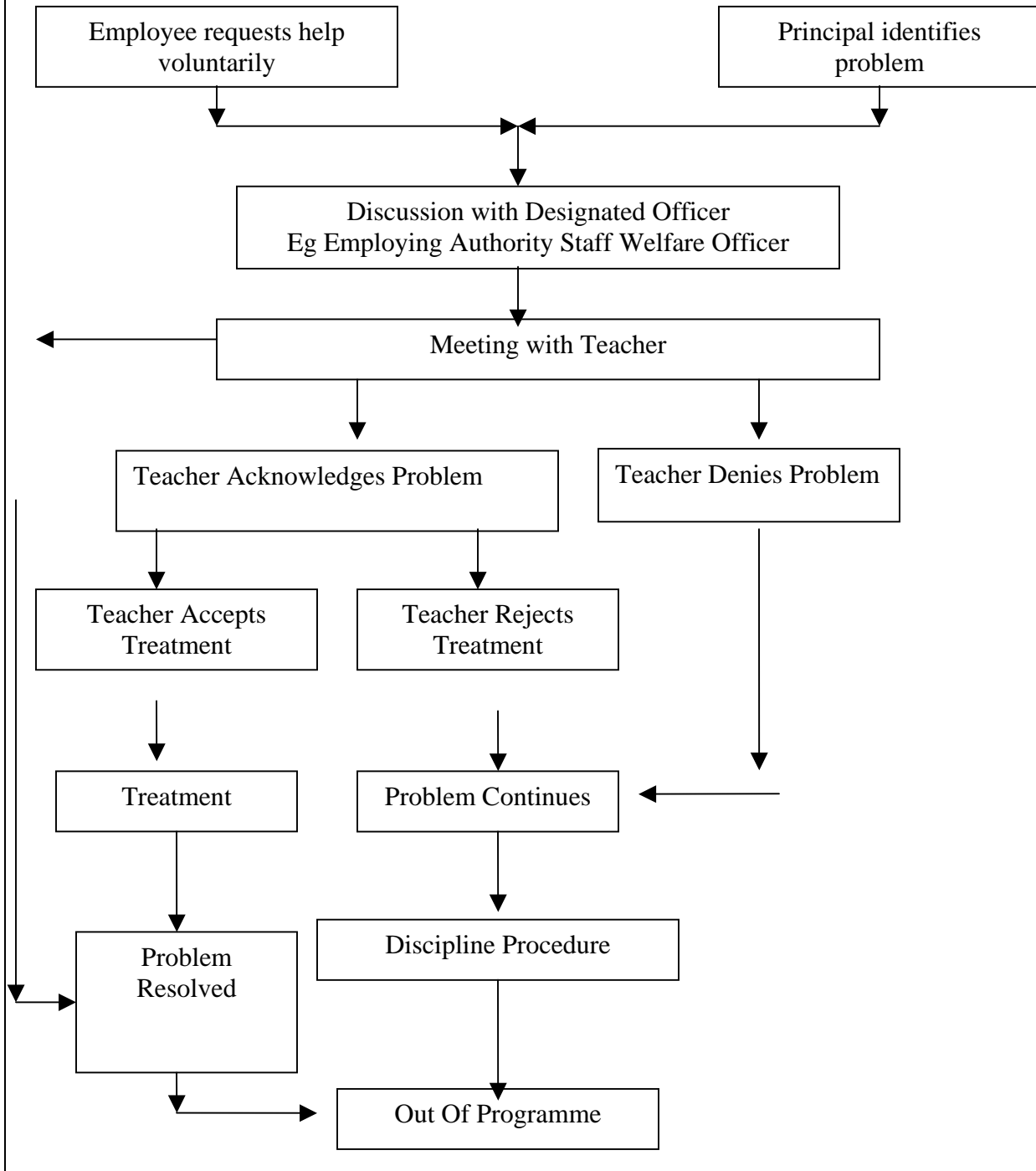
- part time working, gradually increasing to full time work;
- gradual resumption of responsibility.

- 5.4.4 A teacher returning to work may need ongoing support and treatment, for example, ongoing counselling sessions, prescribed medication which is dispensed daily from a local pharmacy etc. The teacher should attempt to arrange appointments outside school hours, or, if not possible, his/her absence from work should be only the minimum time required for the appointment. The school should attempt to provide the flexibility within the teacher's timetable to accommodate such absences.
- 5.4.5 The teacher will be monitored on his/her return to work and if there is a relapse the Principal, with the advice of the (Employing Authority's) Welfare Officer, will consider the new situation on its merits and a further opportunity to seek and cooperate with help may be offered.
- 5.4.6 Where a teacher persistently:
- refuses to acknowledge that there is a problem affecting work;
  - refuses the opportunity to receive help; or
  - discontinues a course of treatment with no legitimate reason, and the problem continues;
- the matter will be referred to the Disciplinary Procedure.

## 6 TRAINING

- 6.1 It is recommended that training be provided to those with special responsibility for implementing the Policy. Depending on the level of responsibility and the knowledge and skills considered necessary, training programmes may include, as appropriate, such issues as:
- Basic understanding of alcohol, drugs and their misuse;
  - The rationale and procedures of the policy;
  - The nature of problem drinking and drug misuse, including possible causes and effects;
  - The relationship between alcohol consumption and drug misuse and problems, behaviour, efficiency, safety and general work performance.
  - Legal issues relating to alcohol and drugs in the workplace;
  - The range of assistance available from local agencies.

# CHECKLIST OF ACTION





**APPENDIX I**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG MISUSE**

<b>SCHOOL:</b> _____	<b>DATE:</b> _____
<b>TEACHER'S NAME:</b> _____	
<b>PRESENT AT INTERVIEW:</b> _____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
<b>REASON FOR INTERVIEW:</b> _____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
<b>BRIEF DETAILS OF MEETING:</b> _____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
<b>AGREED OUTCOMES:</b> _____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
<b>SIGNED BY THOSE PRESENT:</b>	
<b>COMPLETED BY</b>	<b>DATE:</b>

## APPENDIX II

**Sources of Advice, Information and Support****1. Employers' Staff Welfare Officers**

- Belfast Education and Library Board

Mark Marshall                      [markm@belb.co.uk](mailto:markm@belb.co.uk)                      028 90564016

- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Brid O'Neill                      [bridoneill@ccmsschools.com](mailto:bridoneill@ccmsschools.com)                      028 90393865

- North Eastern Education and Library Board

Kathryn Crease                      [kathryn.crease@neelb.org.uk](mailto:kathryn.crease@neelb.org.uk)                      028 25662444

- South Eastern Education and Library Board

Lynette Bailie                      [lynette.bailie@seelb.org.uk](mailto:lynette.bailie@seelb.org.uk)                      028 90566276

- Southern Education and Library Board

Marian Ferguson                      [marian.ferguson@selb.org.uk](mailto:marian.ferguson@selb.org.uk)                      028 37512559

- Western Education and Library Board

Gabriel Mulryan                      [gabriel\\_mulryan@welbni.org](mailto:gabriel_mulryan@welbni.org)                      028 82411344

**2. Health Board Drugs and Alcohol Co-Ordination Teams (DACTs)**

- Eastern Board

Mr Owen O'Neill - Senior Co-ordinator                      028 90434248

- Northern Board

Senior Co-ordination Team                      028 25635575

- Southern Board Co-ordinator

Mr George McKague 028 40660926

- Western Board

Mrs Barbara Ward – Senior Co-ordinator 028 82253950

**3. Alcoholic Anonymous** - 028 90434848

**4. AL ANON** – 028 90243489

**5. Northern Ireland Community Addiction Service (NICAS)** - 028 90664434

**6. Teachers' Unions**

- Associating Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) 028 90327990
- Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) 028 90381455
- National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) 028 90424303
- National Association of Schoolmaster and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) 028 90784480
- Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) 028 90662216