



<u>Policy Title</u>	NCG Alcohol and Substance Misuse
<u>Policy Category</u>	Compliant
<u>Owner</u>	Director of People
<u>Group Executive Lead</u>	Chief Executive Officer
<u>Date Written</u>	April 2023
<u>Considered By</u>	N/A
<u>Approved By</u>	Executive Board
<u>Date Approved</u>	June 2023
<u>Equality Impact Assessment</u>	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics. This policy is available in alternative formats, if required.
<u>Freedom of Information</u>	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
<u>Review Date</u>	June 2026
<u>Policy Summary</u>	The purpose of this policy is to set standards and expectations re the misuse of alcohol and substances and to provide a framework for managing colleagues who are experiencing dependencies or addictions

<u>Applicability of Policy</u>	<u>Consultation Undertaken</u>	<u>Applicable To</u>
Carlisle College	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster College	Yes	Yes
Lewisham College	Yes	Yes
Newcastle College	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form College	Yes	Yes
Professional Services	Yes	Yes
Southwark College	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire College	Yes	Yes

<u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u>	
<u>Previous Approval Date</u>	<u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u>
	New NCG policy incorporating individual College policies into one Group policy.
<u>April 2023</u>	Section 4 – To include low / no alcohol beverages.
	Section 7 – Update on responsibilities
	Appendix A – Update on resources

<u>Linked Documents</u>	
<u>Document Title</u>	<u>Relevance</u>
NCG Code of Conduct Policy	Linked Policy
NCG Disciplinary Policy	Linked Policy
NCG Performance Management Policy	Linked Policy
NCG Probation Policy	Linked Policy
NCG Sickness Absence Policy	Linked Policy
NCG Safeguarding Policy	Linked Policy

1. Scope and Purpose of Policy

This policy does not form part of a colleague's contract of employment and does not confer any contractual rights. It applies to all NCG colleagues, who are employed either on a permanent or temporary basis, including agency workers and volunteers.

The policy applies during hours undertaking work, whether on site or working remotely, travelling for work purposes, attending conferences, social gatherings, or any other work-related function such as an after-work event.

2. Introduction

NCG is committed to providing a safe and positive working environment and to promoting the health and wellbeing of all colleagues. The misuse of drugs and / or alcohol can have a negative impact on performance, attendance, and productivity but most importantly the health and safety of our colleagues. Where appropriate to do so, NCG will adopt a supportive and constructive approach when dealing with colleagues who may be experiencing drug and / or alcohol dependencies or addictions.

Where it is found, or there is a reasonable reason to believe a colleague is under the influence of alcohol or a substance at work, an investigation will be carried out to determine which policy the issue will be managed in line with.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework within which any concerns relating to the use of intoxicating substances, are managed fairly, consistently, and promptly. It also outlines the likely consequences of misusing them. NCG encourages colleagues who may be misusing drugs or alcohol or are aware of a colleague misusing drugs or alcohol to seek help.

3. Referral to an alternative policy / procedure

Where misconduct / performance / attendance concerns arise within a probation period, this will be managed in line with the NCG Probation Policy.

Where there are concerns with the standard of performance, this will be managed in line with the NCG Performance Management Policy.

Where there are concerns with the standard of attendance, this will be managed in line with the NCG Sickness Absence Policy.

Where misconduct concerns arise, this will be managed in line with the NCG Disciplinary Policy.

4. Definition

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'substance misuse' refers to the use of illegal drugs and the misuse, whether deliberate or intentional of prescribed medicines or other substances such as solvents. Substance misuse is defined as any problem whereby the use of substances whether through intoxication, regular

use or dependency impairs the health, wellbeing, conduct or performance of the user.

For the purposes of this policy, the term '**low / no alcohol beverages**' refers to but is not exhaustive of low alcohol and alcohol-free beers, wines, ciders, gins, and spirits.

5. Prescribed Medication

Colleagues are encouraged to inform their line manager should they be prescribed medication or plan to take over-the-counter medicines that may cause side effects that impair their ability to undertake their duties safely and effectively.

If a colleague does experience side effects as a result of taking prescribed or over-the-counter medicines that impair their ability to perform their duties safely and satisfactorily, they must notify their line manager immediately. Colleagues are not obliged to disclose the actual medical condition being treated or the medication.

6. Pre-Employment Screening

As part of the NCG recruitment procedure, all prospective colleagues are required to complete a pre-employment medical questionnaire and any offer of employment is conditional upon the individual fulfilling medical criteria for fitness to work.

Colleagues who work within the Rail Academy, who are sponsored by the academy or involved in the delivery of safety critical training are also required to undergo pre-employment drug and alcohol testing in line with the legal regulations for the Rail Industry.

7. General Standards and Responsibilities

All NCG colleagues are required to promote and adhere to this policy by:

- Taking appropriate steps to prevent the use of illegal drugs, alcohol and misuse of solvents on NCG premises.
- Taking into consideration that alcohol remains in the body long after an alcoholic drink is consumed, when drinking outside of working hours, including the previous evening.
- Helping to maintain NCGs reputation and image by prohibiting the consumption of low / no alcohol beverages on NCG premises.
- Helping to maintain NCG as a safe and secure learning and working environment and supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of all colleagues.
- Adopting a responsible attitude towards drinking alcohol and taking prescribed and over-the-counter medication.

- Reporting for work, and remaining throughout the working day, in a fit condition to undertake their duties and not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Ensuring they are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs, where they are required to drive for work purposes.
- Discussing any concerns regarding colleague's alcohol and substance misuse with their line manager and not attempt to cover up situations where they suspect that substances such as drugs or alcohol are causing a problem at work for a fellow colleague.
- Informing their line manager of any individuals found in possession of drugs, alcohol and low / no alcohol beverages on NCG premises.
- Reporting the discovery of any suspected substances on NCG premises to their line manager / security.
- Reporting any concerns to a senior manager, where the issue involves the line manager.

8. Recognised Dependency Problems

NCG will treat drug and alcohol dependency as a health problem that requires treatment and support and recognises that early intervention is more likely to lead to successful treatment. Where a colleague is concerned or recognises that they have a dependence on drugs or alcohol they should seek help from their GP.

Appendix A provides details of support services available for colleagues.

Colleagues should also speak to their line manager so that appropriate support can be considered to assist rehabilitation and aid recovery at an early stage. Colleagues are expected to engage and co-operate with any support and assistance provided by NCG to address an alcohol or substance misuse problem.

Where a manager is concerned that a colleague may be dependent on drugs or alcohol, they will take reasonable and appropriate steps at an early stage. They may refer the colleague to Occupational Health for assessment. They will treat such matters confidentially as far as is legally and reasonable possible. Advice may also be sought from the colleagues GP or counsellor as appropriate (with the consent of the colleague).

Reasonable periods of absence for advice and treatment for dependence on alcohol or drugs will be treated in accordance with the non-sickness absence policy. Any periods of sickness due to alcohol or substance misuse will be managed in accordance with the sickness absence policy.

Where a colleague has successfully recovered from a dependency on alcohol or drugs and is unable to continue working in a particular role / environment due to possible relapse, if possible, an alternative post may be sought. However, NCG are under no obligation to do so and would be subject to business needs.

9. Misconduct

NCG will support colleagues where there is a recognised dependency problem. However, there may be circumstances, whether dependency-related or not, that it may be appropriate to manage in line with the disciplinary policy. This includes, but is not limited to conduct that:

- Impacts the health, safety and welfare of self, colleagues, and others.
- Impacts the delivery of high-quality education to learners.
- Leads to unacceptable behaviour which is not in accordance with NCG standards and values and Code of Conduct policy.
- Involves unlawful dealings of any alcohol, solvents, substance, or equipment on NCG premises.
- Fails to comply with or disregard medical advice relating to treatment and support, or where there is evidence of a reoccurring substance misuse problem following a successful return to work after a treatment programme. In such circumstances NCG reserves the right to withdraw support.
- Impacts the reputation of NCG.

10. Substance screening and testing

Substance testing may be used during a period of absence and subsequently randomly thereafter, as part of an aftercare rehabilitation programme, to ensure on-going compliance with treatment. Written consent will be required from the colleague for each screening procedure.

In line with the legal regulations for the Rail Industry, colleagues within the Rail Academy and other *safety critical roles* may be required to undergo additional random testing or testing following an incident or accident where the use of alcohol or drugs may be a factor.

11. Variations to this policy / procedure

This procedure is intended as an overview of how drug and alcohol dependency problems are managed, however, it may need to be adapted to suit the needs of each situation. Wherever possible, support will be offered and implemented to assist colleagues throughout the process.

Appendix A

Support for colleagues who recognise they may have a dependency problem is available via the NCG employee or assistance programme or from a number of external sources;

- Employee Assistance Programme – 0800 358 4858
- Alcohol advice number: 0800 917 8282
- Call the National Alcohol Helpline 'Drinkline' on 0300 123 1110
- Speak to Alcoholics Anonymous on 0800 917 7650 or www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
- We Are With You on wearewithyou.org.uk
- Contact the Drug help line support on 0300 123 6600 or www.talktofrank.com