

# Manager's Guide

## How to Handle Workplace Substance Misuse and Impairment Fairly, Safely, and Confidently

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### Welcome

This guide is for managers, supervisors, and team leaders, anyone responsible for people and workplace safety.

It's here to help you recognise and respond to signs of impairment, understand what to do if something doesn't feel right, and know how to handle each situation in a calm, fair, and lawful way.

You don't need to be an expert in drug testing or law; you just need to follow the guidance. This guide connects directly with **your organisation's relevant workplace policies and procedures** and the **Better Testing** approach, a system built on safety, fairness, and support over punishment.

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### Your Role and Responsibilities

As a manager, you're on the front line of safety. You see your team every day, which means you're best placed to spot when something seems off. Your responsibility is to act early, not to accuse or discipline, but to keep everyone safe.

If you suspect someone may be impaired, your role is to handle it professionally and sensitively, following the policy exactly as written. That consistency protects you and the company.

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## Spotting Impairment

Impairment can come from many sources: alcohol, drugs, prescription medication, fatigue, or stress. It's rarely obvious at first, which is why awareness matters.

Look for sudden changes in appearance, mood, or performance, things like confusion, clumsiness, or uncharacteristic mistakes. Don't jump to conclusions; note what you see and keep your focus on safety, not fault.

If you feel something isn't right, move on to a private conversation.

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## Having the Conversation

This is where a good manager makes the difference. The goal isn't to confront, it's to check in.

A quiet, respectful chat can often prevent a bigger issue later.

Find a private space and explain your concern in plain language. Be honest but calm:

"I've noticed you don't seem yourself today, and I just want to make sure you're okay to work safely."

Give them space to talk. There might be a simple explanation, or it might open the door to support.

If you still have concerns after that chat, it's your duty to take the next step, which means assessing risk and involving HR.

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## What to Do Next

If you believe there's a genuine safety concern, your priority is to protect everyone involved. That means temporarily removing the person from any task that could put themselves or others at risk.

Once immediate safety is managed, contact HR or your designated Testing Officer/External testing provider. They'll guide you through whether a test should be carried out and how.

It's important that testing decisions are never made in isolation. The process should always follow your company policy.

Record only the facts: who was involved, what was observed, and what action was taken. Stick to the details, no opinions, no assumptions.

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## Understanding the Testing Process

Testing is used to confirm facts, not to find fault. Every test must follow correct **Collection Protocols** and **Chain of Custody** procedures.

A trained Collection/Testing Officer, whether in house or an external company will handle the process from start to finish. As a manager, your role is to support the employee and ensure the procedure runs smoothly and privately.

You should never carry out a test yourself unless you've completed the official **Collector/Tester Training**.

If a sample requires confirmation, it will be sent to an accredited third-party laboratory for analysis. These labs hold ISO 17025 certification, and your organisation chooses which one to use. *We can suggest trusted providers if needed, but the final decision rests with your company.*

## Providing Support

The Better Testing model is built on rehabilitation, not removal. When someone fails a test or admits they're struggling, that's the moment where support counts most.

Start with a private, welfare-focused meeting. Be clear that the goal is help, not blame. From there, work with HR to agree a **Support Plan**, this might include time off, regular check-ins, or counselling.

*(Some organisations also choose to include access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). An EAP offers confidential, professional help with personal or work-related challenges such as stress, anxiety, or substance use. It's entirely voluntary, and all conversations remain private. If your organisation has one in place, now may be the time to signpost to it)*

A supportive approach protects your team and strengthens your legal position if the case ever goes further.

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## Appeals and Fairness

Every employee has the right to appeal a result or decision. That's what keeps your process transparent.

Your role is to make sure they know how. Point them to your company's **Appeals Process** and **Appeals Form**, and make sure HR is informed straight away. If you do not have these documents already, it is suggested that you put them in place **PRIOR** to beginning workplace substance misuse testing. Once the appeal is logged, step back and allow the formal process to take over.

By following this procedure, you show consistency and fairness, two of the most important factors if a case ever reaches tribunal.

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## Confidentiality and Data

Everything related to testing, results, forms, or conversations, is classed as *special category data* under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

That means you must handle it carefully. Keep physical documents locked away, store electronic files securely, and share only with HR or authorised personnel.

Never discuss results with anyone outside the process. Confidentiality builds trust and keeps your company compliant.

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## Keeping the System Alive

The process doesn't stop once the policy is in place. Managers play a key role in keeping it alive day-to-day.

That means encouraging open conversation, reminding staff about support options, and staying alert to signs of fatigue, stress, or misuse.

Once a year, review what's worked well and where improvements could be made. Share your feedback with HR so the policy can evolve with your workplace.

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## Quick Recap

1. Notice changes or concerns early.
  2. Speak privately and respectfully.
  3. Remove from duty if safety's at risk.
  4. Involve HR or your Testing Officer.
  5. Support don't punish.
  6. Maintain confidentiality.
  7. Review and learn.
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## Final Thoughts

Being a manager in this system isn't about discipline, it's about leadership. You're the bridge between company policy and real-world people. The way you handle these situations defines the culture around you.

Follow your company's policy, use this guide, and remember: Better Testing works because it's built on trust, fairness, and understanding. Handled well, it keeps people safe, gives them a way back, and proves that the best workplaces don't just test, they care.

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## Manager Declaration

I confirm that I have read and understood the contents of this **Manager's Guide – Workplace Substance Misuse & Impairment Policy** and agree to follow and apply the procedures and principles outlined within it.

I understand that it is my responsibility to uphold the company's standards of safety, fairness, and confidentiality at all times, and to act in accordance with the contents and guidance contained within this policy.

**Name (Print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this signed declaration to HR for inclusion in your management compliance file.*