

# Alcohol in the Workplace

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Should the amount of alcohol my employees drink matter to me?

Up to 17 million working days are lost each year in the UK due to alcohol-related illness, costing employers an estimated £1.7 billion. The total cost to the UK economy of alcohol-related problems is thought to be around £7.3 billion a year.

Numerous studies have shown excessive drinking outside of work hours can have the following long-term effects:

- Absenteeism
- Inefficiency
- Poor decision making
- Damaged customer relations
- Procrastination
- Inconsistent performance
- Neglect of detail
- Poorer quality of work
- Less quantity of work
- More frequent mistakes

### Is it costing my business money?

Yes. Most employers recognize that alcohol misuse among employee's carriers a cost to their company. The economic costs as a result of absenteeism, unemployment and death due to alcohol misuse came to over £74 billion across Europe in 2010. 40% of accidents at work involve or are related to alcohol.

### Is having an alcohol policy enough?

Company alcohol policies are highly important but do not always cover prevention approaches. Even with a policy in place, staff drinking at high-risk levels may be unaware of the health risks involved. Companies may not offer opportunities to self-assess drinking levels and staff may under-report alcohol use in face-to-face interventions at work for fear their employment may be affected. Helping employees to proactively self-identify any alcohol-related health risks positions alcohol issues within the wider health and wellbeing agenda, while also serving to signpost to further health advice and/or support.

### How can we identify those people that are drinking problematically?

The most evidence-based method to help identify if drinking poses a risk to individual health, is to use a NICE recommended screening tool called the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). This can be undertaken face-to-face by a health professional or self-administered. The AUDIT tool is 99% accurate in identifying problem drinking.

