

Options for Workplace Drug Testing

Pre-employment workplace drug testing

Pre-employment drug testing is one of the most common types of drug test used by prospective employees. It provides companies with the advantage of detecting drug of applicants prior to engagement potentially making significant savings in future absenteeism and safety critical accidents. The process is widely used and is ideal of recruitment campaigns particularly for seasonal temporary workers.

It is a comparatively inexpensive process as most tests can be undertaken using rapid point of care drug tests, either urines or oral fluid. There are few legal implications as long as the process is undertaken fairly in accordance with equal opportunities. There are a number of well established methods used by collection services such as Modern health Systems Ltd that undertake thousands of these type of tests across the UK each year.

Post-incident drug testing

Post-incident drug testing is one of the most popular options used by employers in the UK basically a drug and alcohol test is undertaken after an accident (or other incident). The rationale for this option is to provide a more acceptable rationale for introducing a workplace drug and alcohol testing policy. It is one of the least contentious options. It enables the employer to link together 'cause and effect' and establish a direct link to the cause of the accident and the company's subsequent potential liabilities. This argument can best be sustained if blood or oral fluid / saliva testing is used. Using modern technology such as the Drugalyser® or Orascan® is the most effective way of proving an employee is 'under the influence' at the time of the incident as urine, hair, or sweat based testing can only detect past drug use. All sample collectors must be trained in and follow strict chain of custody requirements to ensure that the sample is admissible in evidence... All positive on-site tests should be confirmed with a laboratory test before any action is taken against the employee.

Random workplace drug testing

Random workplace drug testing is a very effective deterrent and is recommended for safety critical industries. These tests are implemented by selecting randomly members of staff at pre-arranged times and dates only known to management and the testers. Established workplace drug testing companies such as Modern Health Systems Ltd have long standing protocols for selecting numbers and arranging collections by trained staff that can attend at the client's premises and undertake the tests.

Testing for 'Cause'

This option is similar to post incident testing, in other words there is a rationale of 'grounds of suspicion' that enables the employer to act on a potential breach of the Company Policy. Generally speaking the 'cause' is usually related to grounds of suspicion such as smelling alcohol on the breath or slurred speech or other suspicious behaviour. Ideally these will have been listed within the workplace drug and alcohol policy document and managers will have received specialist training in how to identify such behaviour. Alternatively employers may suspect that substance misuse is responsible for patterns of absenteeism.

The employee will then be required to submit to an agreed workplace drug tests and/or alcohol test.

Return to work

Many workplace drug policies include the option to test employees on their return to work following a period of sickness or absenteeism. There is a significant body of evidence showing links between absenteeism and substance misuse, including a survey conducted by London Chamber of Commerce showing 12m working days having been lost due to alcohol misuse.