

# Condition Insight Report (CIR)

## Alcohol & Drug Misuse

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# Overview

## What is the condition usually called / any abbreviations used?

Alcohol and drug misuse, alcohol or drug dependency

## Brief overview of the condition

Alcohol and all other drugs can have some kind of effect on an individual's mental health. They affect the way we see things, our mood and our behaviour.

These effects may:

- be pleasant or unpleasant
- be short-lived or longer-lasting
- be similar to those you experience as part of a mental health problem
- go away, continue or even get worse once the drug has worn off

For some people, taking drugs and alcohol can lead to long-term mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety or schizophrenia. In severe cases, long term alcohol misuse can lead to Korsakoff Syndrome and/or Wernicke's Encephalopathy. Symptoms include ataxia, confusion and eye movement disorders.

For others, they may have a dual existing mental health condition and take drugs and/or alcohol to help manage this (this is also known as self-medicating).

## What is the generally preferred term for someone with this condition?

Drug and/or alcohol misuse or dependency.

# Presenting Symptoms

It is very important to remember that someone with alcohol or drug misuse may not obviously look any different to someone without such a condition. It is best to focus on asking the person about their feelings and experiences rather than judging according to how they present.

Symptoms arising from alcohol and drug misuse may vary among people and in severity, from mild and moderate to severe depending on the amount of alcohol they drink on a regular basis and the types of drugs they may take, but generally encompass a feeling of low mood and a level of anxiety.

It is difficult to predict how someone will react to a drug. If someone has had a history of poor mental health, they may be more likely to experience negative effects with illegal drugs and alcohol. Individuals may misuse alcohol and/or drugs to cope better with any other mental or physical health conditions they have.

Symptoms of Alcohol and drug misuse are (list not exhaustive):

- Low mood
- Feeling anxious all the time
- Lacking insight and exhibiting risky behaviour
- Agitation and aggressive behaviour
- Alcohol or drug induced seizures/blackouts
- Loss of self-confidence and self-esteem
- Difficulty concentrating
- Not being able to enjoy things that are usually pleasurable or interesting
- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Sleeping problems – difficulties in getting off to sleep or waking up much earlier than usual
- Very strong feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Finding it hard to function at work/college/school/to complete ADL's
- Loss of appetite
- Thinking about suicide and death
- Self-harm
- Physical symptoms such as tremors, vomiting, nausea, diarrhoea, excessive sweating can be present on withdrawal



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# Fluctuations



People with alcohol and drug dependency may be affected more or less severely on different days or at different times of day. Their ability to perform basic tasks, plan, make decisions and work may vary from day to day but they may experience constant symptoms of feeling low and/or anxious.

Think about exploring things like:

- How much would they drink on an average day? What do they drink? What impact does this have on their behaviour/cognition?
- What drugs do they take and how much/often do they take these? What impact does this have on their behaviour/cognition?
- Are they able to talk to others about their condition & how are they managing their personal relationships?
- Do they take drugs or alcohol to help control their mood or anxiety or help manage symptoms from any other underlying health conditions?
- Are there any triggers which may lead to drinking alcohol or taking drugs more/less regularly?
- Consider any reported withdrawal symptoms?
- Safety risks – impulsive behaviour, suicidal intent, reduced insight or in severe cases alcohol or drug induced blackouts/seizures.

# Reliability

What specific areas should be covered to ensure a complete, reflective report?

**S**AFETY



**T**IMELY



**A**CEPTABLE  
STANDARD



**R**EPEATEDLY



Do they have any symptoms which could cause a safety consideration?

For any activities where restriction is reported how long does it take them to complete these activities? Has how long it takes them changed over time?

How have they adapted to completing tasks over time – is this different to what might be considered 'normal'?

Are they able to repeat a task as often as required? Is this the same every day?

Consider safety if there is a lack of insight or impaired cognition as a result of their alcohol or drug misuse. Additionally, consider suicide and/or self-harm risks. Remember if there are imminent plans of suicide and no protective factors the claimant may require safeguarding.

Poor motivation and self-neglect are other symptoms associated with drug and alcohol misuse which can impact on how timely an activity is. This should be explored where relevant.

What level of motivation do they have? Some activities are intrinsic in nature therefore require very little levels of motivation to complete (eat, drink, toilet) however some are more social/ engagement activities that even a small reduction in motivation can impact on.

Individuals may not experience the same emotions throughout the day or between days. They may have triggers or have better days than others which mean that the way they describe a task may not be typical for them. It should be explored what the impact any task has on their mental health and how they manage this to determine if it is repeatable as often as required.

# Sensitivities



## What areas might they find difficult to mention or perhaps understate the impact of?

Someone with alcohol or drug misuse may find it hard to admit that they are struggling to perform basic self-care tasks such as washing and dressing or may fear that they will not be believed if they have managed to perform these tasks on the day of the assessment. They may find it hard to mention the effects that their alcohol or drug misuse can have on personal relationships. They may also find it hard to mention feelings they have had of wanting to take their own lives.

The psychological and physical impact that alcohol or drug misuse can have on an individual can be extremely profound. People may find it difficult to understand and empathise with them, may tell them to 'just stop using' or 'go and see someone' and may fail to understand that someone misusing alcohol or drugs is not simply feeling sad, it is not being lazy, it is experiencing symptoms of a recognised medical condition rather than choosing to behave in a certain way and cannot simply decide to feel better, stop using substances or easily open up to other people or professionals.

It should also be considered that due to their health condition, some individuals may disengage with health professionals or support provided.

**It is important to understand that people who misuse alcohol and/or drugs do not simply choose to do this, it is a health condition that causes them to do so.**

# Customer Care

## How is it best to ask about any sensitive topics and what are the common courtesies?



### In general

- Brief them on exactly what the consultation involves and what they will be asked to do.
- Ask them if they have any initial concerns about the consultation and see if you can address these.
- Ask if there are any adjustments that would make them more comfortable e.g. if they would like a friend or family member for support, and offer them breaks if they need it.
- Be understanding, empathetic, patient and try not to put the individual under any pressure by encouraging them to take their time. Be aware that the person may feel more worthless, low or upset as a result of answering the questions. Also be prepared for what you would do if the person mentioned feeling suicidal or wanting to harm themselves.
- Do not assume the person lacks intelligence, or does not care, if they have difficulty responding to questions or appear as if they are taking no interest.
- Both reading and concentration may be difficult so comprehension may be slow. Keep questions straightforward and give people time to respond. Long term alcohol or drug misuse may slow people's thought processes down.
- Some people with depression may appear irritable or angry as a result of their condition and it is easy to misinterpret this.
- **If they do not have a physical condition please do not ask them about their physical ability to complete tasks but instead focus on the psychological ability.**

# Functional Impact

*A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience*

## Activity 1: Preparing food

Poor motivation, difficulty concentrating, not being able to enjoy things that are usually pleasurable or interesting, feeling anxious all the time and poor motivation affect initiation of preparation of food. Additionally, reduced insight as a result of prolonged and continued alcohol or drug misuse may also restrict one's ability to complete this activity safely. In severe cases, individuals may experience blackouts brought on by their condition, these should be explored and injuries (if any) as a result of these should be discussed.

### Remember in PIP...

Only the psychological aspects of this activity need to be covered if this is the only reported condition. How often do they make meals? Are they motivated, if not why not? When would they initiate the activity? What stops them? What do they usually make? Have they had any incidents and burnt items due to poor concentration and intrusive thoughts? If so, how do they manage this?

## Activity 2: Taking nutrition

Poor appetite can be a factor due to low mood and some may prioritise alcohol usage for food .

### Remember in PIP...

You need to have established the individual's ability to be nourished. Motivation to eat, even if food is given to them should be explored and the extent of any weight loss with how this is managed.

## Activity 3: Managing therapy and monitoring a health condition

Impacts on personal, social and physical functioning can make it very difficult to engage with health services. Someone with alcohol or drug misuse/dependency may struggle to leave the house and attend appointments due to a lack of mental energy or capacity. This can affect their ability to access treatment. In some cases people can be embarrassed to talk about the extent of their worries or difficulties for fear of being judged or misunderstood.

### Remember in PIP...

Therapy input in a domestic setting, which covers majority of weeks and where they require supervision, assistance or prompting to complete should be explored and considered. Ensure to explore how any medication is managed including compensation strategies like alarms to combat restrictions.

# Functional Impact

*A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience*

## Activity 4: Washing and bathing

Poor motivation, difficulty concentrating, feeling anxious all the time can affect completion of personal hygiene and self care tasks. Additionally, reduced insight as a result of prolonged and continued alcohol or drug misuse may also restrict one's ability to complete this activity safely. In severe cases, individuals may experience blackouts brought on by their condition, these should be explored and injuries (if any) as a result of these should be discussed.

### Remember in PIP...

Explore what strategies are used to manage the effects of symptoms and consider whether prompting is needed on the majority of days. Remember to only discuss the psychological impacts within this condition if this is all that is reported. They are likely to be physically able but may be restricted with their intrusive thoughts, lack of self worth, and apathy. How often do they wash? When would they initiate the activity? If not motivated, why not? What stops them? Do they take an interest in their physical appearance?

## Activity 5: Managing toileting needs and incontinence

Consider other comorbidities. In severe cases of alcohol and drug misuse, some may lose control of bladder and/or bowel when under the influence.

### Remember in PIP...

If there is no physical condition reported it is sufficient to explore that they can maintain their toileting hygiene needs and to confirm there is no comorbidity which may affect continence. Do not ask lots of physical questions if they report no physical restrictions.

## Activity 6: Dressing and undressing

Poor motivation, difficulty concentrating, feeling anxious all the time can affect completion of personal hygiene and self care tasks. Additionally, reduced insight as a result of prolonged and continued alcohol or drug misuse may also restrict one's ability to regularly dress and undress.

### Remember in PIP...

Explore what strategies are used to manage the effects of symptoms and consider whether any prompting is required on majority of days. Do not ask about physical restrictions if there is no physical restriction reported. Instead explore: How often they get dressed? When would they initiate the activity? If not motivated, why not? What stops them? Do they take an interest in their physical appearance?



# Functional Impact

*A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience*

## Activity 7: Communicating verbally

Some individuals may find it difficult to engage in verbal communication if distracted by their own thoughts, under the influence or if drug or alcohol misuse has impacted cognitive ability.

### Remember in PIP...

That there are specific boundaries for what is considered basic and complex. How their emotions impact on their ability to manage relationships and respond to individuals is likely to be managed in A9. Ensure to explore for specifics where a restriction is reported to determine if simple and/or complex criteria is met.

## Activity 8: Reading and understanding signs and symbols

Some individuals may find it difficult to manage understanding written information if distracted by their own thoughts, under the influence or if drug or alcohol misuse has impacted cognitive ability.

### Remember in PIP...

That there are specific boundaries for what is considered basic and complex. Ensure to explore for specifics where a restriction is reported to determine if simple and/or complex criteria is met.

## Activity 9: Engaging with others face to face

Someone with missing alcohol and/or drugs may avoid social events and activities they normally enjoy, lose interest in personal and romantic relationships, struggle to think or speak clearly, have difficulty remembering or concentrating on things and feel agitated or exhibit aggressive behaviour.

### Remember in PIP...

Cover where specific restrictions are reported how they manage this. Detail of any support provided and whether this support can be provided by anyone or only specific individuals.

# Functional Impact

*A brief summary of the functional impact those living with this condition may experience*

## Activity 10: Budgeting

Poor motivation, difficulty concentrating, feeling anxious all the time can affect the ability to plan future budgets. Additionally, in severe cases reduced insight as a result of prolonged and continued alcohol or drug misuse affect ability to manage simple budgets.

### Remember in PIP...

That there are specific boundaries for what is considered basic and complex. Ensure to explore for specifics where a restriction is reported to determine if simple and/or complex criteria is met.

## Activity 11: Planning and following a journey

They may also experience psychotic symptoms such as paranoia or hearing voices. While psychosis can be a symptom of other mental health problems, it can also be a symptom in those who have a long standing history of misusing alcohol and/or drugs. Consider the individual's insight and if they would be safe going out unaccompanied, have they had any altercations with others when outside as a result of being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. In severe cases, individuals may experience blackouts brought on by their condition, these should be explored and injuries (if any) as a result of these should be discussed.

### Remember in PIP...

Where there are associated conditions you must explore the 4 stages to a journey 1. Frequency and type of outings 2. before a journey 3. during a journey and 4. post a journey. Any social anxiety and/or anxiety related to change? If so to what extent, how and when does this manifest, how it is managed, is it present on all journeys or just unfamiliar ones? Do they attend their appointments? Where do they go out to and how often?

## Activity 12: Moving around

In severe cases, there may be ataxia as a result of long term vitamin B deficiency, risk of falls must be explored in such cases.

### Remember in PIP...

Do not ask physical questions if no physical condition is reported. It is sufficient to confirm they have no physical condition they wish to discuss and focus on areas pertinent to their reported restrictions.



# Additional reading or other resources

## EXTERNAL

Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work – HSE

How recreational drugs and alcohol affect mental health | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems

Addiction and dependency - support organisations | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems

## INTERNAL

- Desktop Aid – MSE, Activity 9, Activity 11

# Version control