**Overview**

This talk is to raise awareness of the dangers and affects of drug and alcohol use on driving.

**Drugs**

Almost 100 people are killed each year in accidents involving drivers who were impaired by illegal drugs or medicines), over 400 are seriously injured and around 1,100 slightly injured.

The police can stop you if they think you're drug driving. They can:

* Test you at the roadside for cannabis and cocaine using saliva from a mouth swab
* Make you do a field impairment test to check you're fit to drive – including checking your pupils and asking you to walk in a straight line

If you fail either test they will take you to the station to test your blood for drugs including:

* Cannabis (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol)
* Cocaine and benzoylecgonine (a chemical produced when cocaine is broken down by your body)
* Heroin (6-monoacetylmorphine)
* Ketamine
* LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide)
* MDMA or ecstasy (methylenedioxymethamphetamine)
* Meth (methylamphetamine)
* Speed (amphetamine)
* The police can test for other drugs not on this list.

Drugs can affect a driver’s behaviour and body in a variety of ways (depending on the drug). These can include:

* Slower reactions
* Poor concentration and confused thinking
* Distorted perception
* Over confidence, resulting in taking unnecessary risks
* Poor co-ordination
* Erratic behaviour
* Aggression, panic attacks or paranoia
* Blurred vision
* Tremors, dizziness, cramps
* Severe fatigue the following day

The effects can last for hours or even days, and vary from person to person. They can be difficult for an individual to detect

**Prescription Medication**

For many medications it is difficult to predict whether, how, when and for how long they will affect a person’s ability to drive safely. A driver may not even notice that they have been impaired until it is too late. The effects depend on how much, how often and how a medicine is used, plus the psychological and physical attributes of the person taking it.

Some medicines may cause:

* Drowsiness
* Dizziness or feeling light-headed
* Difficulty concentrating
* Feeling edgy, angry or aggressive
* Feeling nauseous or otherwise unwell
* Reduced coordination, including shaking
* Feeling unstable

A person’s driving ability can also be affected by the medical condition for which they are taking the medicine. Many over-the-counter medicines, including remedies for coughs, colds, flu and hay fever, cause unwanted drowsiness which might impair driving. Warnings about drowsiness are not always clear so, for example, if the label says "may cause drowsiness", assume that it will do so.

If in doubt please seek advice from your doctor.

**Alcohol**

Over 200 people are killed and more than 1,100 seriously injured in drink drive crashes each year. Often it is an innocent person who suffers, not the driver who is over the drink drive limit. Pedestrians, motorcyclists, pedal cyclists and vehicle passengers are killed or seriously injured by drink drivers each year, as are around 40 children

* Current limits in Scotland are 22mcg of alcohol in 100ml of breath or 50mg of alcohol in 100ml of blood.
* Even small amount of alcohol can seriously affect the ability to drive safely.
* Alcohol impairs judgement, making drivers over-confident and more likely to take risks.
* Alcohol slows reactions, increases stopping distances, affects judgement of speed and distance and reduces the field of vision.

Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream very quickly, but it takes about an hour for 1 unit to be removed by a healthy liver. The exact number of units of alcohol in a drink depends on its size and alcoholic strength by volume (abv). For example, a 175ml glass of wine of 12%abv would be 2.1 units, and a 250ml glass of the same wine would be 3 units.

Drinkers cannot be sure how much alcohol they are consuming because the alcoholic strength of drinks varies enormously, as does the size of measures. In pubs, bars and restaurants a glass of wine could be 175ml or 250ml, bottles and cans are different sizes and spirits could be 25ml or 35ml measures. Drinks poured at home are usually larger than ones bought in a pub or restaurant, and it is difficult to know the alcoholic strength of a drink without seeing the bottle.

The speed with which alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream varies depending on a person’s size, age, weight and gender and whether they have eaten. The same amount of alcohol creates different blood alcohol levels in different people.

Never rely on trying to calculate accurately how much alcohol is in your body, and whether you are above or below the drink drive limit.

Many drink drivers are caught the morning after they have been drinking. As it takes several hours for alcohol to disappear from the body, someone who was drinking late the previous evening, could easily still be over the limit on their way to work the next morning. Even if under the limit, they may still be affected by the alcohol in their body.

**The Legal Penalties**

The penalties for drink driving, drug driving and driving while unfit through drugs are:

* A minimum 12-month driving ban
* A criminal record
* A substantial fine or up to 6 months in prison or both

Other consequences can include losing your job loss, losing independence, higher car insurance when you get your licence back and trouble getting into countries like the USA. Of course, the ultimate penalty could be having to live with injuring or even killing another person

**Falkirk Council Drug & Alcohol Policy**

The council has an existing Drug & Alcohol Policy which covers all aspects of the misuse of drug and alcohol.

Legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a duty of care on Falkirk Council to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees. This includes the need to address the issue of substance misuse in order to protect employees, their colleagues and members of the public.

The aim of this policy is to have a positive and constructive approach to dealing with the misuse of alcohol and drugs in the workplace, encouraging identification of alcohol and drug related problems and offering support to employees who may be vulnerable.

Consumption of alcohol or the use of drugs can impair performance at work, increasing the likelihood of accidents or mistakes which may endanger colleagues or members of the public. In addition to the health and safety risks, substance misuse can result in absence, conduct or performance problems, impacting on attendance, timekeeping, behaviour, standards of work and the public image of the Council.

Where substance misuse has been identified, either by the individual themselves or by a line manger, the Council recognises the need to support employees through a range of support options, whilst ensuring appropriate standards of attendance, conduct and performance are maintained.

Staff should familiarise themselves with this policy.

[Policies - Drug and Alcohol Policy | Falkirk Council](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/employees/policies/drug-alcohol-policy.aspx)