PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR HR AND MANAGERS

LET'S TALK.
LET'S LISTEN.

A kinder conversation starts here.

When a colleague mentions drinking, asks for help or appears to be struggling, you do not need to have all the answers. You do need to listen, respect privacy and know where to signpost them.

DO

Find a private moment. Ask open questions. Listen without judgement. Agree next steps together.

DON'T

Diagnose, lecture, make assumptions or promise absolute confidentiality.

A helpful opening line

"I wanted to check how things are going. Is there anything you would like support with?"

REAL CONVERSATIONS

WHAT TO SAY.
WHAT TO AVOID.

IF SOMEONE CONFIDES IN YOU

Try: "Thanks for trusting me. What would help right now?"

Avoid: "You need to stop drinking."

IF ATTENDANCE IS A CONCERN

Try: "I have noticed some absences. Is everything OK?"

Avoid: "This must be because of drinking."

IF SOMEONE WANTS SUPPORT

Try: "We can look at support options together, if you would like."

Avoid: "You have to download this app."

Respect confidentiality, but explain any safeguarding or safety obligations clearly. Follow your organisation’s policies.

PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

SUPPORT WITHOUT THE PRESSURE.

LISTEN FIRST

Ask what the employee wants to share. Do not force a disclosure.

CHECK WORKPLACE SAFETY

Follow existing procedures for impairment or safety-critical roles.

SIGNPOST PROPERLY

Consider occupational health, a GP, NHS alcohol services or specialist support.

OFFER A FREE EXTRA

Sober Society can offer community and practical tools, but is not treatment or a substitute for professional care.

IMPORTANT: Alcohol withdrawal can be dangerous. Anyone who may be physically dependent should seek medical advice before stopping suddenly. For immediate danger, use emergency services.