

NORTHERN IRELAND

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL CAMPAIGN

WORKPLACE DRUGS AND ALCOHOL POLICIES

This booklet is an integral part of the Workplace Resource Pack on Drugs and Alcohol which has been developed as part of the Northern Ireland Drugs and Alcohol Campaign. The Pack also includes Guidelines on Developing and Implementing Workplace Drugs and Alcohol Policies and an example of a Model Policy.

**INFORMATION
BOOKLET
FOR WORKERS**

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with information on workplace drugs and alcohol policies. It provides information on the effects of drugs and alcohol and highlights what you can do about drugs and alcohol-related problems in your workplace.

Drugs and alcohol-related problems can harm your health and cause disability and in some cases death. Families, friends, work colleagues and customers can feel the effects.

WORKPLACE DRUGS AND ALCOHOL POLICIES

Workplace drugs and alcohol policies aim to protect and promote your health, well-being and safety.

They aim specifically to:

- Make people at work aware of how drugs and alcohol can affect health, well-being and work performance;
- Enable everybody at work to recognise a problem at the earliest stage;
- Identify sources of help and encourage people at work to support colleagues with drug and/or alcohol problems in seeking help;
- Inform the workforce of what happens in their workplace when a drug or alcohol problem becomes a condition needing professional help.

Benefits Of Workplace Policies

It is good practice for workplaces to develop drugs and alcohol policies. They are intended for everybody at work and need support and commitment from both you and your employer to make them work.

Information Booklet For Workers

Raising Awareness Early Recognition Support

**Workplace
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Benefits for YOU	Benefits for your EMPLOYER
Help to protect your health, safety and welfare	Help to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of employees
Identify a problem early	Assist in retaining trained, experienced workers
Advise you how to help a workmate who may have a problem	Improve working relationships
Advise you how you can get help	Improve attendance and productivity
Support you during your recovery and help you to get back to work	Contribute to the health and welfare of society as a whole

Law and the Workplace

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 requires your employer to protect your health, safety and welfare at work. You too have a legal responsibility to protect your own health and safety and that of your colleagues.

Your workplace policy will reflect the fact that certain drugs are illegal. The possession, buying and selling of these illegal drugs is a criminal offence, as is the abuse or supply of certain prescribed drugs.

Prescribed Drugs (Legal Drugs)

Some medicines, obtained with or without a prescription, can affect how you do your work. Tell your doctor or chemist about the job you do before you take any medicine. Remember to tell your supervisor or manager about any medicine you are taking which may affect your judgement or safety and the safety of your workmates.

Testing

Some workplaces may introduce testing as part of a policy. If testing is likely to be introduced you will be consulted and can have your say. There are strict procedures and quality assurance arrangements, which will apply.

THE EFFECTS OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Drugs and alcohol affect your behaviour and ability to carry out everyday activities. They affect:

Your thinking and judgement:

- At work they may cause you to make mistakes and to have difficulty in working things out. They also prevent you from making the best decisions.
- They interfere with your ability to pay attention and to remember information.

Relationships

- They can affect how you get on with family, friends and people at work. The result may be rows, disagreements or fights.

**Drugs and
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Your co-ordination and reaction time

- They interfere with your ability to control your eyes, hands and feet and with your ability to react quickly when necessary.
- Driving involves many of the above. Drugs and alcohol will affect your judgment of distance and your ability to be a safe driver. Risk-taking increases and decision-making skills begin to decline even at low blood alcohol levels.

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How you feel

- With alcohol you can feel relaxed and happy but it is a depressant drug which can make you feel tired, low and depressed.

WARNING SIGNS OF A PROBLEM AT WORK

These are some of the things which people seeking help for a problem say about the effects of drugs or alcohol on their work:

- I can't think clearly;
- I am clumsy and have poor coordination;
- I have problems with my vision;
- I regularly do my job whilst under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- I don't do my job to the best of my ability;
- I often feel tired or not interested in things;
- I drink heavily late into the night and then go to work early next day;
- I take risks at work, which may affect my safety and that of other people;
- I go to work when I'm hung over;
- I miss work because I'm hung over;
- I have been aggressive and uncooperative at work because of drugs or alcohol;
- I don't do the job to the best of my ability because of drinking or drug use;
- I need a drink at lunchtime or during the day;
- I feel sick, get the shakes or feel worried or nervy if I don't have a drink;
- I regularly drink more than the recommended standard number of drinks each day.

I take risks at work which may affect my safety and that of other people.

For further information on drugs and alcohol, please see back of booklet

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Promote the benefits of Workplace Drug and Alcohol policies and contribute to their development and implementation;
- If you think you have a problem now is the time to tackle it;
- Support colleagues who may have a problem to enable them to get help;
- Be part of a culture which tackles rather than ignores the issues;
- Follow the organisation's rules and procedures.

**If you think you
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GETTING HELP

- If you have a problem you can get help; the policy will tell you how;
- The aim is to get you better as soon as possible;
- Speak to your employer or your union representative;
- If you have an occupational health nurse or doctor ask for an appointment;
- Speak to your GP, he/she too will help you;
- The arrangements for getting help to return to work will be described in the policy or you can also contact the agencies stated in the Sources of Advice and Information section;
- The policy will describe the arrangements regarding privacy and confidentiality;
- The arrangements for time off for treatment/rehabilitation will be described in the policy.

Alcohol and its Effects¹

What happens when you drink alcohol

- ➔ Alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream within a few minutes of being drunk and carried to all parts of your body including the brain.
- ➔ The concentration of alcohol in the body, known as the ‘blood alcohol concentration’, depends on many factors, but principally, how much you have drunk, how long you have been drinking, whether you have eaten, and your size and weight. It is difficult to know exactly how much alcohol is in your bloodstream or what effect it may have.
- ➔ It takes a healthy liver about 1 hour to break down and remove 1 unit of alcohol. A unit is equivalent to 8 gm or 10 ml (1 cl) of pure alcohol.

¹*Don't Mix it – a guide for employers on alcohol at work produced by HSE Books IND(G)240L (rev11/96).*

The following all contain one unit of alcohol;



A half pint
of ordinary
strength
beer, lager
and cider
(3.5% ABV)¹



A single
25ml
measure
of
spirits
(40% ABV)



A small
glass of
wine
(9%ABV)

- If someone drinks 2 pints of ordinary strength beer at lunchtime or half a bottle of wine (i.e. 4 units), they will still have alcohol in their bloodstream 3 hours later. Similarly, if someone drinks heavily in the evening they may still be over the legal drink drive limit the following morning.
- Black coffee, cold showers and fresh air will not sober someone up. Only time can remove alcohol from the bloodstream.

Daily Benchmarks

The following benchmarks are a guide to how much adult men and women can drink in a day without putting their health at risk. They apply whether you drink every day, once or twice a week, or occasionally. The benchmarks are not targets to drink up to. There are times and circumstances when it makes sense not to drink at all.

¹ *ABV: Alcohol By Volume*

Men

If you drink between **3 and 4 units** a day or less, there are no significant risks to your health

BUT...

If you consistently drink **4 or more units** a day, there is an increasing risk to your health.

Women

If you drink between **2 and 3 units** a day or less, there are no significant risks to your health

BUT...

If you consistently drink **3 or more units** a day, there is an increasing risk to your health.

Note: the benchmarks don't apply to young people who have not yet reached physical maturity.

Alcohol & Pregnancy

Women trying to become pregnant or who are at any stage of pregnancy should be advised to set a limit of one or two units a week e.g. one or two small glasses of wine and avoid getting drunk. Drinking too much alcohol may make it harder for a woman to become pregnant, as well as directly affecting the developing baby in the womb. Even after the baby is born, alcohol can be passed to the baby in small amounts through breast milk and this may affect the baby's feeding habits, bowel movements and sleeping patterns.

Harm from Alcohol

Disorder	Associated Illnesses
Liver Disorders	Hepatitis; Cirrhosis; Fatty liver; Cancer.
Gastrointestinal Problems	Pancreatitis; Cancer of the oesophagus; Gastritis; Digestive problems.
Heart and Circulatory Problems	High blood pressure; Stroke; Abnormal heart rhythm; Chronic heart muscle damage.
Brain Disorders	Blackouts and memory loss; Impaired co-ordination, judgement and concentration; Wernicke's Encephalopathy; Korsakoff's Syndrome; Cerebellar degeneration; Dementia.
Cancer	Cancer of the larynx, the throat, the gullet and the oesophagus.
Reproductive Problems	Impotence and infertility in men; disruption of menstrual cycle in women.
Malnutrition	Impaired metabolism; Reduced food intake; Weight loss; Obesity.
Respiratory Problems	Pneumonia; Fractured ribs.
Pregnancy	Damage to foetus; Foetal Alcohol Syndrome; Miscarriage; Premature delivery; Stillbirth; Growth retardation.
Mental Health	Anxiety; Depression; Suicide.

Harm From Alcohol¹

Alcohol consumption is implicated in:

- 80% of deaths from fires
- 65% of serious head injuries
- 50% of murders
- 40% of road traffic accidents
- 30% of accidents in the home

¹Chick J. *Understanding Alcohol and Drinking Problems*. BMA 1999.

Illicit Drugs, Prescribed Drugs and Volatile Substances and their Effects¹

Name (street/trade names include):	How usually taken:	Effects sought:
Heroin (smack, horse, gear, H, junk, brown, stag, scag, jack)	Injected, snorted or smoked.	Drowsiness, sense of warmth and well-being.
Cocaine (coke, charlie, snow, C)	Snorted in powder form, injected.	Sense of well-being, alertness and confidence.
Crack (freebase, rock, wash, stone)	Smokable form of cocaine.	Similar to those of snorted cocaine but initial feelings are much more intense.
Ecstasy (E, XTC, doves, disco biscuits, echoes, scooby doos) Chemical name: MDMA	Swallowed, usually in tablet form.	Alert and energetic but with a calmness and a sense of well-being towards others. Heightened sense of sound and colour.
LSD (acid, trips, tabs, dots, blotters, microdots)	Swallowed on tiny square of paper.	Hallucinations, including distorted or mixed-up sense of vision, hearing and time. An LSD trip can last as long as 8-12 hours.
Magic mushrooms (shrooms, mushies)	Eaten raw or dried, cooked in food or brewed in a tea.	Similar effects to those of LSD but the trip is often milder and shorter.
Barbiturates (barbs, downers)	Swallowed as tablets or capsules, injected.	Calm and relaxed state, larger doses produce a drunken effect.
Amphetamines (speed, whizz, uppers, billy, sulph, amp)	In powder form, dissolved in drinks, injected, sniffed/snorted.	Stimulates the nervous system, wakefulness, feeling of energy and confidence.

¹ *Drug Misuse at Work – a guide for employers HSE Books IND(G)91 (rev2).*

Harmful effects include:	Legal status:
Physical dependence, tolerance. Overdose can lead to coma and even death. Sharing injecting equipment brings risk of HIV or hepatitis infection.	Class A.
Dependence, restlessness, paranoia, damage to nasal membranes.	Class A.
As for cocaine but, because of the intensity of its effects, crack use can be extremely hard to control, damage to lungs.	Class A.
Possible nausea and panic, overheating and dehydration if dancing, which can be fatal. Use has been linked to liver and kidney problems. Long-term effects not clear but may include mental illness and depression.	Class A.
There is no way of stopping a bad trip which may be a very frightening experience. Increased risk of accidents can trigger off long-term mental problems.	Class A.
As for LSD, with the additional risk of sickness and poisoning.	Not illegal in raw state but Class A once dried or processed in any way.
Dependency and tolerance. Overdose can lead to coma or even death. Severe withdrawal symptoms.	Class B.
Insomnia, mood swings, irritability, panic. The comedown (hangover) can be severe and last for several days.	Class B.

Name (street/trade names include):	How usually taken:	Effects sought:
Cannabis (hash, dope, grass, blow, ganja, weed, shit, puff, marijuana)	Rolled with tobacco into a spliff, joint or reefer and smoked, smoked in a pipe or eaten.	Relaxed, talkative state, heightened sense of sound and colour.
Tranquillisers (brand names include: Valium, Altivan, Mogadon (moggies), Temazepam (wobblies, mazzies, jellies))	Swallowed as tablets or capsules, injected.	Prescribed for the relief of anxiety and to treat insomnia, high doses cause drowsiness.
Anabolic steroids (many trade names)	Injected or swallowed as tablets.	Will result in increased muscle bulk and strength. Possibly helps recovery from intensive exercise.
Poppers (alkyl nitrates, including amyl nitrate with trade names such as Ram, TNT, Thrust)	Vapours from small bottle of liquid are breathed in through mouth or nose.	Brief and intense head-rush caused by sudden surge of blood through the brain.
Volatile Substances¹ including solvents, lighter gas refills, aerosols, glues, paint, some paint thinners and correcting fluids.	Sniffed or breathed into the lungs.	Short-lived effects similar to being drunk, thick-headed, dizziness, possible hallucinations.

¹ The use of these substances is mainly among young people. See also booklet entitled *Volatile Substance Abuse - A guide for professionals*. Health Promotion Agency 2002.

Harmful effects include:	Legal status:
Impaired co-ordination and increased risk of accidents, poor concentration, anxiety, depression, increased risk of respiratory diseases including lung cancer.	Class B
Dependency and tolerance, increased risk of accidents, overdose can be fatal, severe withdrawal symptoms.	Class C. Available only on prescription (Medicines Act). Supply is illegal but, apart from Temazepam, not illegal to possess without a prescription. (Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and associated Regulations).
For men: erection problems, risk of heart attack or liver problems. For women: development of male characteristics. Injecting equipment brings risk of HIV or hepatitis infection. Increased aggression, acne, increase in blood pressure and cholesterol.	Class C.
Nausea and headaches, fainting, loss of balance, skin problems around the mouth and nose, particularly dangerous for those with glaucoma, anaemia, breathing or heart problems.	Not illegal to possess but supply without prescription is illegal and can be an offence.
Nausea, blackouts, increased risk of accidents. Fatal heart problems can cause instant death.	Not illegal to possess but it is illegal for a shopkeeper to sell solvents to anyone under 18, if they suspect they are intended for misuse.

Prescribed and Over the Counter Drugs

The following categories of medication have the potential to cause side effects, which could have an impact on work performance.

Prescription medicines

- Antidepressants;
- Some antihistamines;
- Certain medications used to treat high blood pressure;
- Certain medications used to treat joint diseases;
- Benzodiazepines;
- Some cough medicines;
- Certain muscle relaxants;
- Certain painkillers (e.g. morphine, codeine);
- Tranquillisers;
- Sleeping pills;
- Certain drugs used for the treatment of epilepsy.

Certain medical conditions can also affect work performance as can some treatments for diabetes including insulin.

Over the counter medications

- Some antihistamines;
- Some cold and cough medicines.

Both prescribed drugs and over the counter medications may be abused either because they are not taken in accordance with the directions or, in the case of prescribed drugs, if they are used by a person for whom they have not been prescribed.

Sources of Advice and Information

THE HEALTH PROMOTION AGENCY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

18 Ormeau Avenue
Belfast

BT2 8HS

Tel: 028 9031 1611

Fax: 028 9031 1711

Website: www.drugsprevention.net
or

www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk
E-mail: info@hpani.org.uk

In respect of drugs and alcohol the Agency provides information for professionals and the public, carries out research and training and provides policy advice.

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (HSENI)

83 Ladas Drive
Belfast

BT6 9FR

Tel: 028 9024 3249

Fax: 028 9023 5383

Website: www.hseni.gov.uk

E-mail: hсени@detini.gov.uk

The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland provides advice on all aspects of health and safety legislation. It can provide information on sources of occupational health support.

THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE, IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS (NICICTU)

3 Crescent Gardens

Belfast

BT7 1NS

Tel: 028 9024 7940

Fax: 028 9024 6898

Website: www.ictuni.org

E-mail: info@ictuni.org

Many trade unions have produced guidelines on drugs and alcohol and these are available through NICICTU. It also provides training courses.

LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

Head Office

2-8 Gordon Street

Belfast

BT1 2LG

Tel: 028 9032 1442

Fax: 028 9033 0827

Textphone: 028 9023 8411

E-mail: info@lra.org.uk

Regional Office

1-3 Guildhall Street

Londonderry

BT48 6BJ

Tel: 028 7126 9639

Fax: 028 7126 7729

The Labour Relations Agency is an independent public body established to assist both employers and employees on employment law and employee relations matters.

BOARD HEALTH PROMOTION DEPARTMENTS

Health Promotion Departments can assist workplaces in developing and implementing drug and alcohol policies by providing advice and information and facilitating training for all staff.

To contact the Health Promotion Departments:

EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

GENERAL INFORMATION AND HEALTH PROMOTION MATERIAL:

Communication Resource and
Information Service(CRIS)
EHSSB
Champion House
12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BS
Tel: 028 9032 1313

HEALTH PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

North and West Belfast Trust
Grove Tree
106 Cullingtree Road
Belfast
BT12 4BA
Tel: 028 9033 2299

HEALTH PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

Down and Lisburn Trust
Mayrhona Bungalow
Thompson House Hospital
19-21 Magheralave Road
Lisburn
BT28 3BP
(temporary address)
Tel: 028 9264 1152

HEALTH PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

Ulster Community Hospitals Trust
Ards Community Hospital
Church Street
Newtownards
BT23 4AD
Tel: 028 9151 0181

HEALTH PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

South and East Belfast Trust
Belvoir Health Centre
Drumart Square
Belfast
BT8 4EY
Tel: 028 9049 1555

NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

Health Promotion Service
Homefirst Community Trust
Spruce House
Cushendall Road
Ballymena
BT43 6HL
Tel: 028 2563 5575

SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

Southern Area Health Promotion
Department
Lisanally House
87 Lisanally Lane
Armagh
BT61 7HW
Tel: 028 3752 0500/1

WESTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

Health Promotion Department
Westcare
Lime Villa
12c Gransha Park
Londonderry
BT47 6WJ
Tel: 028 7186 5127

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL CO-ORDINATION TEAMS (DACTs)

Drugs and Alcohol Co-ordination
Teams are an integral part of the
Northern Ireland Campaign on
Drugs and Alcohol. They can help
signpost you to resources in your
locality to meet your specific needs.

NORTHERN BOARD

Co-ordinator, NDACT
County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
Ballymena
BT42 1QB
Tel: 028 2566 2575
Fax: 028 2566 2090

EASTERN BOARD

Co-ordinator, EDACT
Champion House
12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BS
Tel: 028 9055 3663
Fax: 028 9055 3682

SOUTHERN BOARD

Co-ordinator, SDACT
30a Arderys Lane
Banbridge
BT32 3RE
Tel: 028 4066 0982
Fax: 028 4066 2534

WESTERN BOARD

Co-ordinator, WDACT
15 Gransha Park
Londonderry
BT47 6FN
Tel: 028 7186 0086
Fax: 028 7186 0311

National Workplace Organisations

CBI

Centre Point
103 New Oxford Street
London
WC1A 1DU
Tel: 020 7379 7400
www.cbi.org.uk/home

CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT (CIPD)

CIPD House
35 Camp Road
Wimbledon
London
SW19 4UX

Tel: 020 8971 9000
www.cipd.co.uk

This is the UK's largest institute for those involved in the management and development of people.

TRADE UNION CONGRESS (TUC)

23-28 Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3LS
Tel: 020 7636 4030
www.tuc.org.uk

Workplace Drugs and
Alcohol Policies
help everybody make
the best contribution
to their work and home
life by helping to
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and long-term prosperity