



**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  
Drugs and  
Alcohol  
Policies are  
intended for  
everybody at  
work and  
need support  
and  
commitment  
from both  
you and  
your  
employer**

<b>Benefits for YOU</b>	<b>Benefits for your EMPLOYER</b>
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



## **Information Booklet For Workers**

Raising Awareness  
Early Recognition  
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### **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  
Alcohol affect  
your behaviour  
and ability to  
carry out  
everyday  
activities**

**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.

**Risk-taking  
increases and  
decision-making  
skills begin to  
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low blood  
alcohol levels.**

**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  
have a problem  
now is the time  
to tackle it**

## 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 Effects <sup>1</sup>

### **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.

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

## Information Booklet For Workers

## Raising Awareness Early Recognition Support

The following all contain one unit of alcohol;



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



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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 Alcohol<sup>1</sup>**

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

<sup>1</sup>Chick J. *Understanding Alcohol and Drinking Problems*. BMA 1999.

### Illicit Drugs, Prescribed Drugs and Volatile Substances and their Effects<sup>1</sup>

Name (street/trade names include):	How usually taken:	Effects sought:
<b>Heroin</b> (smack, horse, gear, H, junk, brown, stag, scag, jack)	Injected, snorted or smoked.	Drowsiness, sense of warmth and well-being.
<b>Cocaine</b> (coke, charlie, snow, C)	Snorted in powder form, injected.	Sense of well-being, alertness and confidence.
<b>Crack</b> (freebase, rock, wash, stone)	Smokable form of cocaine.	Similar to those of snorted cocaine but initial feelings are much more intense.
<b>Ecstasy</b> (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.
<b>LSD</b> (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.
<b>Magic mushrooms</b> (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.
<b>Barbiturates</b> (barbs, downers)	Swallowed as tablets or capsules, injected.	Calm and relaxed state, larger doses produce a drunken effect.
<b>Amphetamines</b> (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.

<sup>1</sup> *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:
<b>Cannabis</b> (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.
<b>Tranquillisers</b> (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.
<b>Anabolic steroids</b> (many trade names)	Injected or swallowed as tablets.	Will result in increased muscle bulk and strength. Possibly helps recovery from intensive exercise.
<b>Poppers</b> (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.
<b>Volatile Substances</b> <sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.



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**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](http://www.drugsprevention.net)  
or  
[www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk)  
E-mail: [info@hpani.org.uk](mailto: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](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)  
E-mail: [hzeni@detini.gov.uk](mailto:hzeni@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](http://www.ictuni.org)  
E-mail: [info@ictuni.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.cipd.co.uk)

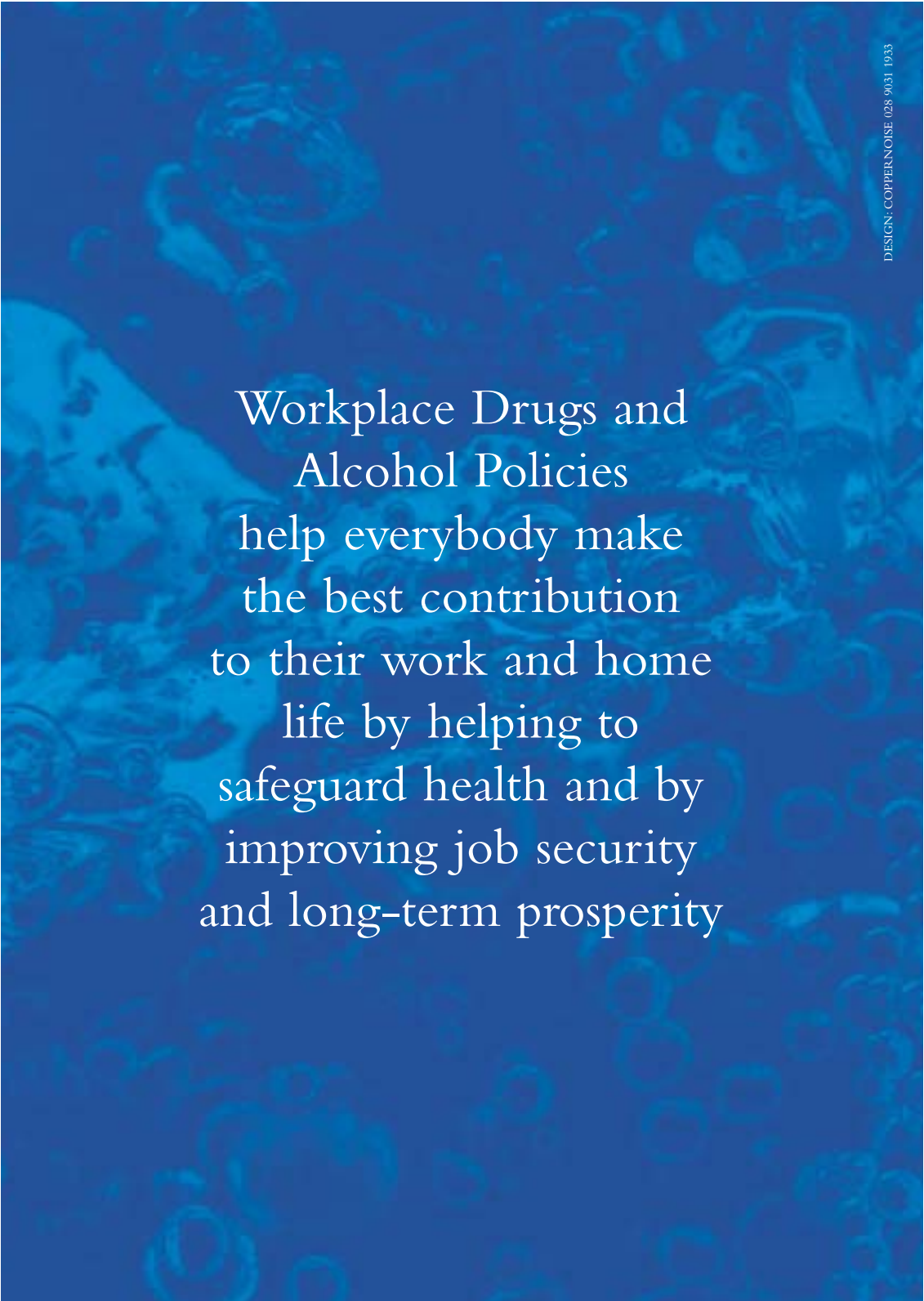
This is the UK's largest institute for those involved in the management and development of people.

**TRADE UNION CONGRESS  
(TUC)**

23-28 Great Russell Street  
London  
WC1B 3LS

Tel: 020 7636 4030

[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)



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