WORKBOOK AND SELF HELP TOOLS

ALCOHOL and you

IS IT TIME FOR A CHANGE?

ALCOHOL and you

Alcohol and you is funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Impact of Alcohol Programme.

Alcohol and you is a partnership of the South Eastern Trust, ASCERT and Addiction NI to reduce alcohol related harm.

ALCOHOL and you

Who is this booklet for?

It is good you picked up this booklet. It is our belief that what is on these pages will be helpful.

This booklet is for anyone concerned that their drinking is affecting them in a negative way.

It is not a replacement for professional help if you need it. Where to get help and support is at the back of this booklet.

For many people, cutting down on their drinking would be a practical step forward. It could avoid a lot of problems in the future.

Used in excess, alcohol is a potentially dangerous drug. You may have concerns about your physical health. Alcohol does take its toll on the human body. People often do things completely out of character under the influence of alcohol. You may be concerned about how it affects you, your family or friends.

How will this booklet be helpful?

What is in this booklet will help you examine your own alcohol use. It will give you information and practical ideas that will help you make choices that are right for you.

You may want to know more about the effects of alcohol. You may also want to take a closer look at your own drinking. You may want a clearer idea about how people change their drinking habits. If you decide you want to cut down your drinking then there is a resource to help you do that.

If you have tried to stop in the past and were unable to, this booklet may help you on the process to start thinking about stopping again. The exercises in this booklet can be used as self help (on your own) or with the support of someone to talk over the exercises.

We hope you find it helpful, if you would like more information or to work on this online, please visit www.alcoholandyouni.com

Whatever your goal, this booklet is to help you see that change is possible. How you use this material is entirely up to you. Even small changes to how much or how often you drink can make a substantial difference.

We wish you well in your efforts.

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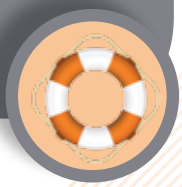
Make it work:

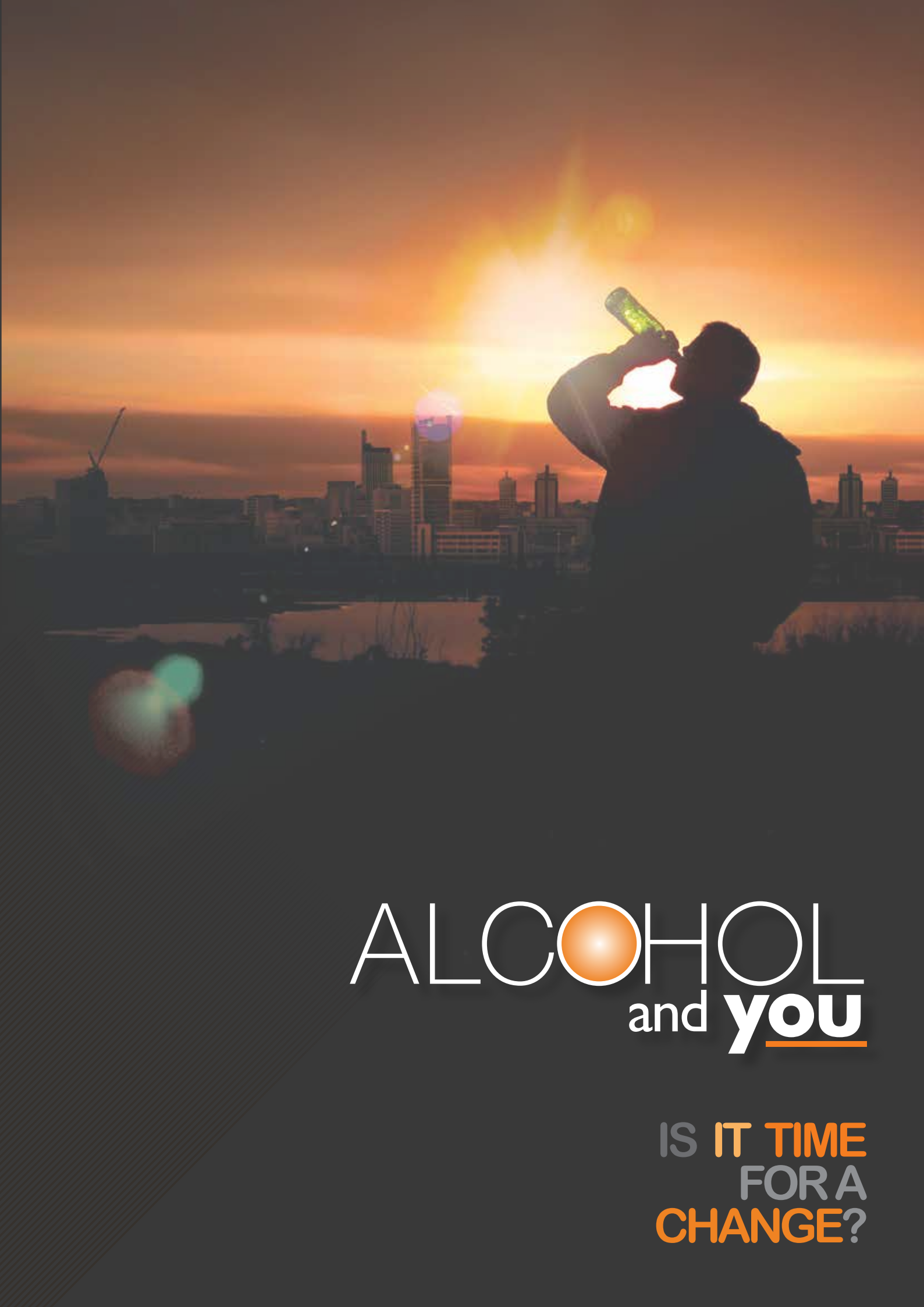
THE METHODS WITHIN THIS BOOKLET CAN WORK. THEY WILL WORK SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER IF:

1. You have good reasons to want to change your drinking habits.
2. You make changing your drinking a priority for yourself.
3. You feel confident to give the task of changing your drinking an honest attempt.

IS IT TIME FOR A CHANGE?



ALCOHOL and you



ALCOHOL and you

IS IT TIME FOR A CHANGE?

Getting ready

Problems are more likely to develop when people repeatedly use alcohol for the drug effect. Three types of common situations of drinking that raise concerns include using alcohol;

- **to cope**
- **to feel better**
- **to get drunk**

Where does drinking fit in your life?

Why do you think you drink?

I drink to help me relax	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink to show affection	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink because it makes me feel good	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink because of pressure from friends	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink because it helps me sleep	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink because I enjoy the taste	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink in order to celebrate	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink to help me do boring things	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink to forget my worries	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink because it gives me confidence	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink to be sociable	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink because there is nothing else to do	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink when I am angry	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink to get drunk	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink because it's a big part of who I am	☐ seldom/often	☐
I drink out of habit	☐ seldom/often	☐

Are there other reasons you drink? Please write them below.

I drink because .....

.....

.....

Could the amount you drink be putting you at risk?

How do you see your drinking?

A lot of people in Northern Ireland drink. At a first glance how would you see your drinking?

Where would you put it?

Why look at your drinking?

You may think your level of risk is lower than it is. This is especially true if your friends and family drink a lot. The questions on the next page will help you find out if your drinking could put you at risk.

What is risky drinking?

A quick way to find out

Have you ever stepped back and had an objective look at your drinking?

Could the amount you drink be putting you at risk of health or other alcohol-related problems?

Here is a quick, easy, and confidential way to find out. The AUDIT questionnaire on the next page was developed to help people examine their drinking.

- **Read through the following questions about your use of alcoholic beverages during the past year.**
- **In the questions, a drink is equal to a glass, can or bottle of beer, one small glass of wine or a pub measure of spirits. A pint would count as two drinks.**
- **Use the check boxes to mark your answers, and then total the score.**
- **When you are finished, we'll give you feedback about your score.**

ALCOHOL and you Alcohol Audit

Please tick the box next to your answer for each question, and then add up your score.

1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?

☐ Never (0) ☐ Less than monthly (1) ☐ 2-4 times a month (2) ☐ 2-3 times a week (3) ☐ 4 or more times a week (4)

2. How many standard drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?

☐ 1 or 2 (0) ☐ 3 or 4 (1) ☐ 5 or 6 (2) ☐ 7 to 9 (3) ☐ 10 or more (4)

3. How often do you have 6 or more drinks in one occasion?

☐ Never (0) ☐ Less than Monthly ☐ Monthly (2) ☐ Weekly (3) ☐ Daily or almost daily (4)

4. How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?

☐ Never (0) ☐ Less than Monthly ☐ Monthly (2) ☐ Weekly (3) ☐ Daily or almost daily (4)

5. How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected? from you because of drinking?

☐ Never (0) ☐ Less than Monthly ☐ Monthly (2) ☐ Weekly (3) ☐ Daily or almost daily (4)

6. How often during the last year have you needed a drink in the morning to get? yourself going after a heavy drinking session?

☐ Never (0) ☐ Less than Monthly ☐ Monthly (2) ☐ Weekly (3) ☐ Daily or almost daily (4)

7. How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?

☐ Never (0) ☐ Less than Monthly ☐ Monthly (2) ☐ Weekly (3) ☐ Daily or almost daily (4)

8. How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?

☐ Never (0) ☐ Less than Monthly ☐ Monthly (2) ☐ Weekly (3) ☐ Daily or almost daily (4)

9. Have you or someone else been injured as a result of your drinking?

☐ No (0) ☐ Yes, but not in the last year (2) ☐ Yes, during the last year (4)

10. Has a relative, friend, doctor, or health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested that you should cut down?

☐ No (0) ☐ Yes, but not in the last year (2) ☐ Yes, during the last year (4)

Your total score:

What does your score mean?

The AUDIT questionnaire was developed by the World Health Organisation to evaluate a person's use of alcohol. Your AUDIT score shows whether your drinking could be hazardous and putting you at risk. Higher scores typically reflect more serious problems.

Make it all make sense.

Add up your score...

Now, add up all your scores.

Your Audit score is?

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

0-7	8-15	16-19	20+
LOW RISK	HAZARDOUS	HIGH RISK	HIGHEST RISK

LOW RISK: Not likely to cause serious harm. Remember, there are no completely safe limits.

HAZARDOUS: Increased risk of harm including physical, mental, social, legal, financial problems.

HIGH RISK: Drinking at this level will eventually result in harm if not already doing so. Risk of dependence is there.

HIGHEST RISK: Definite harm. Likely to be dependent.

What are your thoughts about your score?

What do you think about your score?

If you are drinking at the hazardous level, you may want to think about cutting down stopping or even stopping for a while. If you are drinking at high risk / highest risk levels it would be a good idea to see you GP. Your drinking could lead you to seriou problems.

Alcohol-related consequences

Excessive drinking can contribute to range of difficulties

- Physical health problems
- Work/educational problems
- Emotional problems
- Relationship problems
- Blackouts/memory problems
- Parenting issues /social services involvement
- Legal problems
- Financial problems

Which of these would you be worried about?

Your Notes

"When people stop or reduce heavy drinking these consequences will often decrease or disappear"

How people change?

If what you have read so far has you thinking about your drinking, it might help to have a closer look at how change happens. Everyone, no matter who they are, goes through five stages when changing anything like smoking, drinking or other drug use. A persons' next step will depend on what stage they are in.

What is the best way forward?

Moving from one stage to the next means seeing "where you are at" and deciding what the best way forward is.

What are the 5 stages?

Behaviour change is rarely a single event. We move gradually from being uninterested (pre-contemplation stage) to thinking about change (contemplation stage) to committing to make a change.

One

Not thinking about change (Pre-contemplation)

Someone who is at the first stage is not really thinking about changing. They like what they are doing. They don't see it as a problem.

Two

Thinking about it but not quite ready to change (Contemplation)

At this stage, someone is considering change. But... that is all they are doing, considering it. Although they are more aware of the consequences of what they are doing, they are not sure or ambivalent about change.

Three

Getting ready to change (Preparation)

Someone in the preparation stage has made the decision to change and are getting ready to change. It is a mind-set shift. They make a committed, determined decision. The person gets a plan of "how" they are going to do it.

Four

Making change happen (Action)

In this stage, someone begins to make those changes, perhaps using short-term rewards to keep themselves motivated and often turning to family, friends and others for support.

Five

Maintenance (keeping the change going)

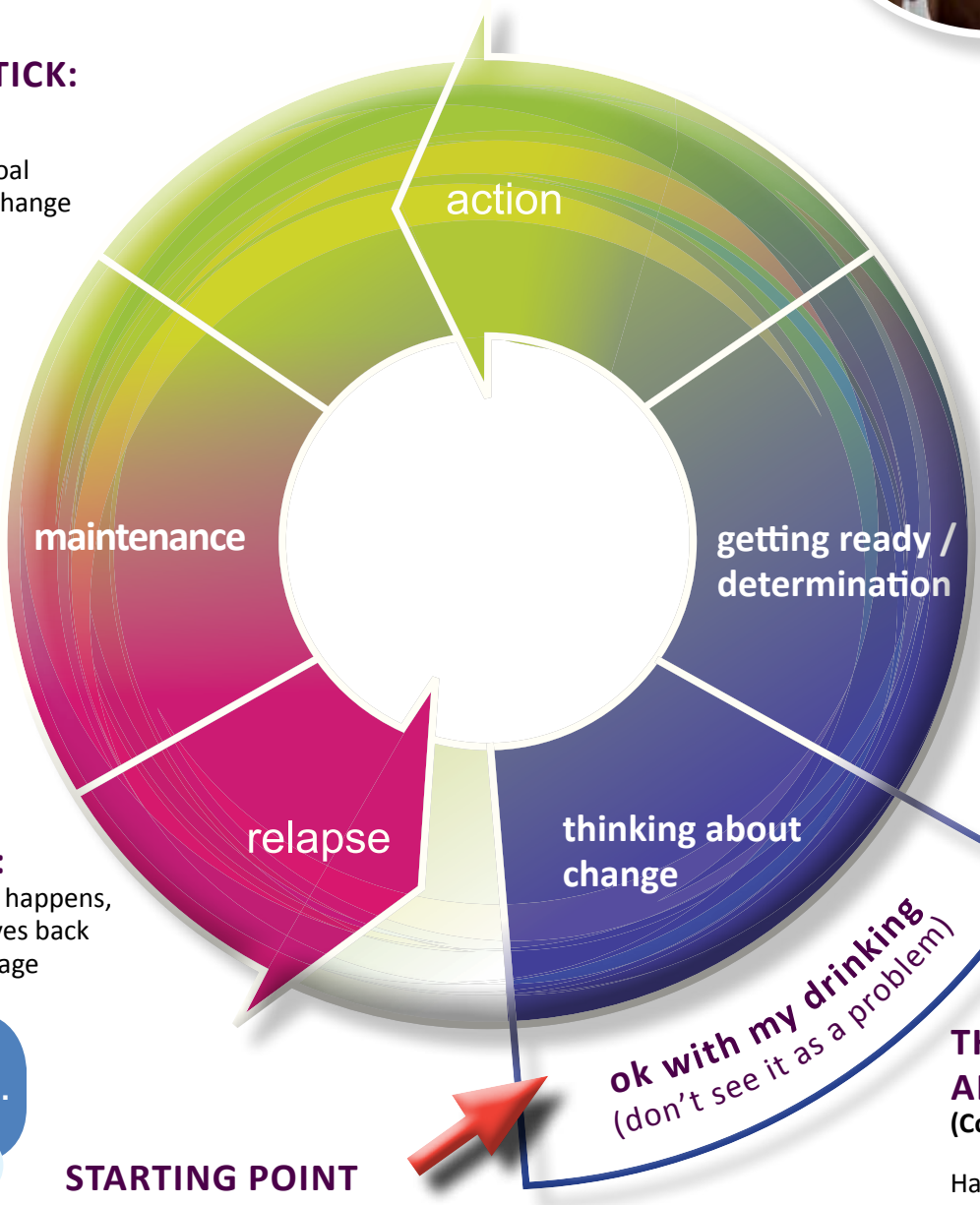
Someone in the maintenance stage works to keep the decision to change going.

Where are you in the Stages of Change?

ACTION: Has started change. 3 to 6 months of hard work to keep the decision going

MAKING IT STICK:
(Maintenance)

Has reached their goal and is maintaining change



GETTING READY:
(Preparation / Determination)

Mind set change. Gets a plan, gets committed

Making a plan is crucial for your success

SLIP BACK:
(Relapse) if this happens, the person moves back to a previous stage

Back to planning...

STARTING POINT

I am ok with what I am doing (Precontemplation)
Does not see a problem. Outside the circle.

THINKING ABOUT IT:
(Contemplation)

Has thought about change, but has not put this into action

Where do you think you are? _____

What makes you think this? _____

What is your next step? _____

Ideas on the next page may help you answer this _____

Dealing with relapse

Along the way to changing, relapse is always a possibility. Although relapse can be discouraging, relapses can be an important opportunity to learn from and decide to try again. The key is to look back over your efforts and develop a plan for the next time. People who relapse may need to learn how to anticipate high-risk situations more effectively (like being around people who drink heavily).

People often find it helpful to know what stage they are at

The people who developed the stages of change think so.
On the next page, think through the stages, where you are and why.

(Source: Prochaska, JO and DiClemente, C 1982) For further reading have a look at Changing for Good by James Prochaska, James Norcross, and Carlo DiClemente (1994: Avon Books). It is a good resource for helping people change a range of things like smoking, drinking and other health related issues.

Your Notes

What can you do to support change?

This way of looking at change does not say change is easy. What else is going on in your life? The influence of friends or how much support you have will have an impact. It does mean that you will have different needs depending on what stage you think you are at.

Stage of change	What can you do to move forward?
Does not see a problem (Pre-contemplation) I am ok with what I am doing	• Increase your awareness of the harm alcohol can cause. (Read the section Low and Risky Drinking: What you Don't Know Can Harm You.) • Challenge positive attitudes toward drinking • Get other interests
Thinking about it (Contemplation) Has thought about change but that is all. Unsure about change.	• Identify reasons to change • Discuss fears or concerns of not changing • Build your belief that you can change if you want to • Consider what is important to you
Getting ready (Preparation / Determination) Gets committed to change, makes a plan	• Determine how best to make the changes you need • Make a plan • Get support (see help and support section)
Action (keeping the decision going)	• Take steps towards changing • Work on preventing relapse • Build other interests, hobbies • Find other ways to relax, socialise • Build your skills of coping, decision making • Make changes in your lifestyle and friends
Relapse	• Get back on track / review your plan • Learn from what happened • Build your confidence so you can try to change again • Talk to people who have successfully changed • Get support (see help and support section)

Taking stock

HEAVIEST DRINKING DAY

To help you look at your drinking, think about a 24 hour period when your drinking was at its worst.

Type of drink / amount?	Where?	With whom and why?	Total Units?	Cost?

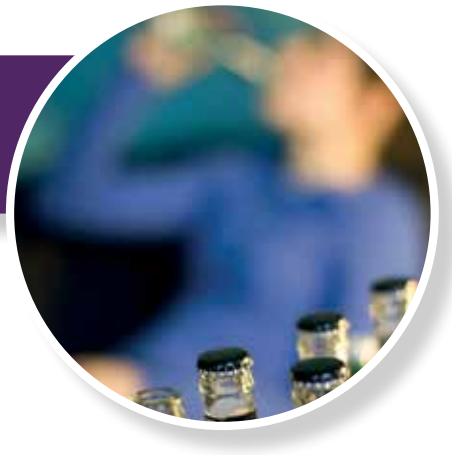
What was good about this particular day?

What was not good about it?

If I continue to drink at this level, these are some of the things I worry about happening?

Benefits from drinking less

Your choice.
It is entirely up to you.



When you drink alcohol excessively, there are risks to all areas of your life. These risks can be avoided or minimised by not drinking at all or drinking at a level that would be considered within the responsible drinking guidelines (see p34). Whatever you decide to do is entirely up to you.

It is important you think through carefully and make decisions that are best for you.

In order to think through your reasons for cutting down, ask yourself, in the last three months:

	YES	NO
Have you woken up unable to remember some of the events of the day/night before?	☐	☐
Do you argue more with family or friends under the influence of alcohol?	☐	☐
Do you feel rotten the day after drinking?	☐	☐
Does your drinking effect your finances?	☐	☐
Have you given up, hobbies, sports, interests and spend more time drinking?	☐	☐
Do you tend to depend on alcohol in certain situations?	☐	☐
Which ones?		
Have you concealed the amount you are drinking in any way from those you care about?	☐	☐
Have you behaved in any way that you regret when drinking?	☐	☐
Does alcohol seem to change your personality?	☐	☐
Have your work relationships been affected through your drinking?	☐	☐

Time to think.

Think about what you would like to change and the reasons why

Your Notes

Now check the reasons below that take you away from what is important to you:

- [ ] Have you woken up unable to remember some of the events of the day/night before?
- [ ] Do you argue more with family or friends under the influence of alcohol?
- [ ] Do you feel rotten the day after drinking?
- [ ] Does your drinking effect your finances?
- [ ] Have you given up, hobbies, sports, interests and spend more time drinking?
- [ ] Do you tend to depend on alcohol in certain situations?
- [ ] Have you concealed the amount you are drinking in any way from those you care about?
- [ ] Have you behaved in any way that you regret when drinking?
- [ ] Does alcohol seem to change your personality?
- [ ] Have your work relationships been affected through your drinking?

A positive response to any of these questions may point towards some of the benefits you will experience if you drink less.

Weighing it all up; the decision balance exercise

When people make any decision, they often weigh up the pros and cons to help them make the decision that is right for them. This is particularly useful when someone is in the thinking about change stage (contemplation).

Write down some GOOD things about both continuing the way your drink and also changing the way you drink. Do the same for the bad things (negatives). Next, give a score of importance to each item

1. Slightly important, 2. Moderately important, 3. Very important, 4. Extremely important

Continue my present drinking pattern	Change my drinking pattern
What will I gain?	What will I gain?
What will I lose?	What will I lose?

Write down your reasons for wanting to change your drinking

Reason 1

Reason 2

Reason 3

Reason 4

Write down what you would want to be different...

What would you want different for yourself?

Is it time for a change?

Decision time; what do you want to do with your drinking:

STAY THE SAME,

CUT DOWN,

OR QUIT?

The aim of the previous pages was for you to take a closer look at how your drinking is affecting you.

The goal you set is entirely up to you. There is additional information to help you no matter what you decide. Making a decision and making a commitment to work toward your goal is an important step.

But what are you going to do?

If you stay the same, that is your call. Both quitting and cutting down takes effort.
What might help you with that decision?

STAY THE SAME, CUT DOWN, OR QUIT?

Quitting might be a better choice when	Cutting down might be a better choice when
Honesty tells me trying to control my drinking just won't work for me.	I know I am not going to quit.
I have tried to cut down before and it just did not work.	Drinking does not interfere with my quality of life or well-being.
The consequences of me continuing to drink are just too much (health, relationships).	The level of my drinking has benefits that outweigh the consequences.
My mental health has been really affected	My drinking does not interfere with my work, education, etc.
I am worried I am dependent. I want to have more control in my life and use of alcohol is controlling me.	I can set a limit or say no at times.
I am in trouble with the law or have financial problems.	I know it is costly, but I am willing to take the risk.

THERE ARE TIMES ANY DRINKING IS TOO MUCH

- When driving or operating machines
- When pregnant or breast feeding
- When taking certain medications
- With certain medical conditions, i.e. liver problems
- You can't control your drinking

IS IT TIME FOR A CHANGE?

Setting your goal

Looking over what you have read and written so far, which do you feel is the best goal for you?

Set your goal and cut down your drinking.

Cut down my drinking ☐

To cut out drinking for a while and then work to cut down ☐

To stop drinking completely ☐

What are your main reasons for what you have chosen?

Your agreement with yourself

I will start on this day _____

I will keep my drinking below this many units in a single drinking session _____

I will have _____ alcohol free days per week

I will not drink more than _____ units in a week

Other questions you may want to ask yourself:

How important is it for me to do something about my drinking?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NOT IMPORTANT									VERY IMPORTANT

Can you think of something that would help increase your points by one?

In the next 3 months, how confident am I that I can cut down my drinking or stop all together.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NOT CONFIDENT									VERY CONFIDENT

Agree to a period of abstinence

A period of abstinence

To get started on any work to cut down your drinking and keeping to that level, a period of 6 to 8 weeks of not drinking any alcohol is recommended. This will give your liver and other parts of your body a chance of getting back to normal.

Research suggests people who avoid drinking for this length of time do significantly better in controlling their drinking. If possible agree to a period of abstinence with your support worker, GP, or family member.

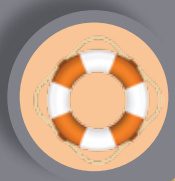
Any period of not drinking will be helpful in your attempts to cut down.

Your Notes

Ways to cut down

There are many ways to help yourself stay within your limits. Here are some suggestions.

- Keep to your personal drinking rules; when, where and how to drink
- Pace yourself
- Take smaller sips
- Put your glass down between sips
- Change your drink
- Drink for the taste
- If you drink spirits, dilute them and have a soft drink between alcoholic drinks
- Learn to refuse drinks
- Avoid rounds. If you are in company, buy the first round and your own after that
- Reward yourself for success
- Have a cut off point that is realistic, yet represents a meaningful reduction in your drinking
- Have days of rest from alcohol



It helps to remember that alcohol is a sedative drug that will impair judgement. 3 to 5 units for most people over two hours will be enough to lose self-control. For women its less. Keeping to limits can take more than willpower. Determination, a plan and support are as important.

A period of abstinence What happens if I slip?

Sometimes you may go over your personal limit. It helps not to view this as failure, but an opportunity to learn what puts you at risk. If you keep finding yourself drinking more than you attended to and it is causing you difficulties you may need to rethink your goal. Talk this over with your GP or support worker.

Staying within your goal

To help you reach your goal, keep a 'diary' of your drinking. A form is enclosed that you can photocopy. Write down every time you drink, how much, where and with whom. This will give you a view on how well you are progressing with your goal.

Drinking Diary

There are many ways to help yourself stay within your limits. Here are some suggestions.

Day	Time	Where & Why?	With Whom?	What?	Units	Cost?
Mon						
Tues						
Wed						
Thurs						
Fri						
Sat						
Sun						
Totals						

Your high risk situations

Stopping or cutting down your drinking takes commitment and continuous effort.

People have more success changing when they have a plan.

Knowing your high risk spots helps you prepare how you are going to deal with the pressure to turn back from the goal you set.

What would put you under more pressure?

People have more success changing when they have a plan.

	Almost never	Sometimes	Often
When I'm with other people who are drinking			
When I feel tense			
When I have to meet people			
When I think that just one would cause no harm			
When I feel depressed			
When I'm not at work or school that day			
When I feel happy			
When I have money to spend			
When I feel frustrated with my life			
When I feel tired			
When I feel disappointed that other people have let me down			
When I remember the good times drinking			
When I am bored			
Other			

My main high risk points are?	How can I avoid or cope with these situations?
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

Dealing with pressure

Some people find they get stuck thinking about drinking or get pressure from friends.

These are a few tips if you feel under pressure.

Think about the good things about sticking to your goal

Look back over the things you have identified in this booklet. It helps to pay attention to these positive things rather that focusing on what you seem to be giving up. Add more items of your own to the list of benefits.

Think about the bad side of excessive drinking

Make a list of unpleasant experiences associated getting drunk. Try to think of an image of a specific thing that tells you, "I just don't want that."

Distractions

Doing something you enjoy or you want to get done will get your mind off drinking

Self-reinforcement

Remind yourself of your success so far. Do you want to give that up?

Leave or change the situation

If it is putting you under too much pressure get up and leave.

Call someone

Who in the past has been helpful? Keep in mind it is ok to ask for help.

Which of these would work for you?

To reach any goal, it is important to ask for help if you need it

A note about depression and withdrawal

Some people drink because they feel down. Depression is characterised by feelings of sadness, loss of interest and decreased energy. If you feel depressed for two weeks or more see your GP.

People have more success changing when they have a plan.

If you have been drinking heavily for a time, your body may react to being alcohol free. This is withdrawal. If you scored over 20 on page it would be recommended to see you GP. If you do stop drinking and experience shakes, sweats or other signs of withdrawal see your GP immediately.

Alcohol withdrawal can be dangerous.

Help and support

Have you ever heard "A problem shared is a problem solved"? Telling someone about your goal helps people change.

Who are you going to tell? .....

Who also would be helpful to you, practically, emotionally or physically?

.....

Your Notes

Low and risky drinking: what you don't know can harm you

This section is to provide some basic alcohol information. After you had a look at it, is there anything you found interesting or surprising?

What's all the fuss made about drinking?

What's all the fuss made about drinking?

When many people think of drug abuse, they don't connect it with alcohol. The reason is partly cultural. In Northern Ireland many adults drink alcohol. It is legal and socially acceptable.

Think of the ads and media images of alcohol. They portray fun, excitement and humour.

Yet there is another side. In Northern Ireland in 2010 there were 284 alcohol related deaths and over 11,500 admissions to hospital due to alcohol. These figures are sadly rising. One reason for that is alcohol is 66% more affordable today than it was in 1987.

Before we go on any further, we need to agree on a definition:

Alcohol is a drug

A drug is a chemical, which causes changes in the way the human body functions, either mentally, physically or emotionally.

Taking this definition then:

It is more than just a drug. It is a toxic, addictive, sedative drug. Let's take a closer look.

Alcohol and the body:

It is a **NARCOTIC DRUG** that blunts the senses. The word narcotic comes from the Greek word, narcosis, to numb or to stupefy.

Any chemical that alters the mood, feelings, co-ordination, perception or behaviour, alters brain cells and disrupts their normal chemical behaviour.

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant which slows down the body's functions. Its effects are similar to those of a general anaesthetic. If you take away the ingredients that give taste and colour to any alcohol beverage you get ethyl alcohol

(C2H5OH). Remove the water and you get ether. (HOH5C2)

Ether is an anaesthetic that numbs the brain and puts it to sleep.

Alcohol and ether are basically the same drugs.

Within 4 to 5 minutes, after drinking, alcohol is present in the blood stream and is distributed to all parts of the body. 10% is eliminated through breath, urine and sweat. The liver deals with the rest.

The liver is the organ that disposes most of the alcohol the body consumes at no more than one unit per hour. This is why units are so important. Drink more than one unit in an hour and the excess alcohol goes into the blood stream and then throughout the whole body.

Your Notes

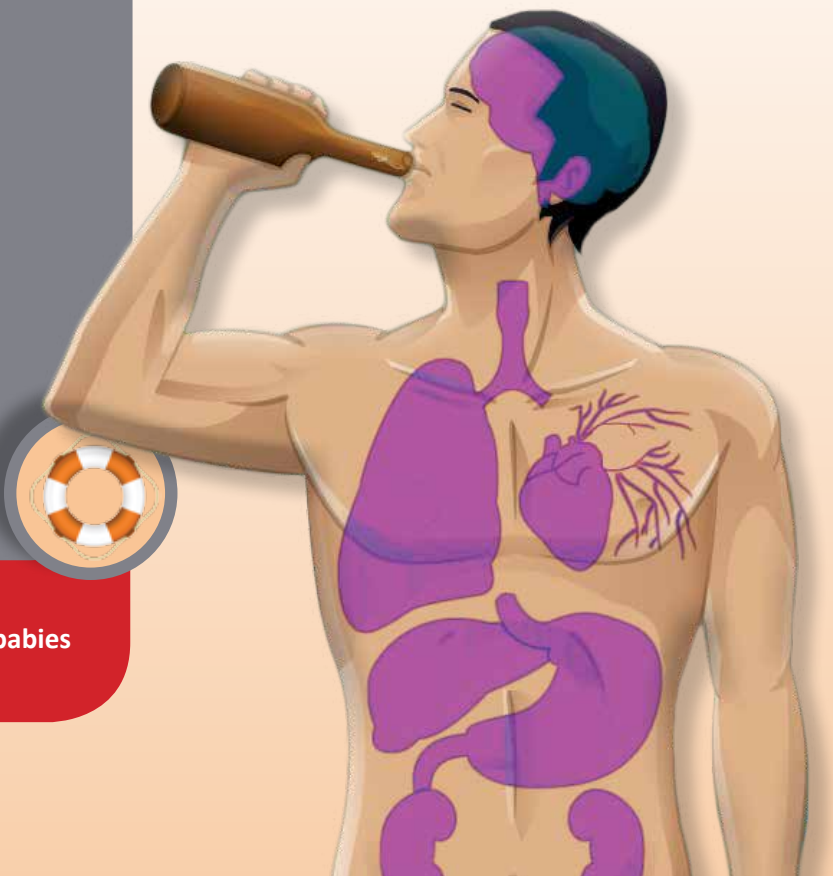
Where alcohol takes its toll

Heavy Drinking Effects

- Alcohol impacts on virtually every cell and organ system in the body.
- The more consumed, the more damage done. The damage is often gradual and you don't see it until it hits you.
- It is a powerful drug known to change personality.
- Alcohol can damage an unborn baby. Advice would be to avoid drinking alcohol when pregnant or breast feeding.
- If you are trying to have a baby alcohol can reduce fertility and ability to conceive.
- Drinking excessively can cause a range of family and emotional problems.
- It is the cause of many accident and hospital admissions.

Effects of heavy excessive drinking

- Alcohol dependency
- Memory loss
- Premature aging
- Drinkers nose
- Weakness of the heart muscle
- Heart failure
- Anaemia
- Impaired blood clotting
- Breast cancer
- Vitamin deficiency
- Bleeding
- Inflation of the stomach
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea, malnutrition
- Inflation of the pancreas



In men: Impaired sexual function
In women Risk of harm to unborn babies

Would you know a unit of alcohol if you saw one?

Measuring alcohol units can be a challenge for all of us. It gives a way to keep a check on how much we are drinking. One unit is 8 grams of alcohol. Because alcohol comes in many strengths and size of containers it is useful to know how many units each drink contains.

Some beverages now have units on the label.

Add pictures of containers of units try to get ones common to what people drink i.e. a quarter bottle of vodka 7 units buckfast 12

Size and Beverage	Strength	Units
A standards glass of wine (175ml)	12%	2.1
A glass of red or white wine (175ml)	13%	2.3
A large glass of wine (250ml)	13%	3
A measure of spirit (35ml)	40%	1.4
A bottle of ordinary strength alcopops (275ml)	5%	1.4
A bottle of ordinary strength alcopops (700ml)	5%	3.5
A pint of low strength beer	3.5-4%	2-2.3
A pint of stronger beer	5%	3
A can of strong cider / lager (440ml)	9%	4
A quarter bottle of spirits - gin, vodka, whiskey (200ml)	40%	7
A half bottle of vodka (350ml)	40%	14
Buckfast (75cl)	15%	11.5
A bottle of strong cider (3000ml)	7.5%	22.5

Any decrease in drinking is a positive step forward.

Responsible drinking guidelines

There is no completely safe limit of drinking. What would be considered a low risk is up to 3 units a day for a man and up to 2 to 3 units for a woman.

Any decrease in drinking is a positive step forward.

It is important for your body to have at least 2 few days without any alcohol.

There is some evidence that moderate drinking has some health benefits for some people. This includes men over 40 and post menopausal women. Discuss this with your G.P.

It is also important to note that even drinking under 3 units begins to impair judgement, control and decision making.

Other effects of alcohol depend on…

Now that you have an idea of how much alcohol harms the body, its effects depend on several factors, not merely how much or how quickly you drink.

- Weight is one factor – alcohol will have greater effect on a lighter person.
- A person's mood, if they have eaten and where they drink are also factors.
- Women react more quickly than men do. They have proportionately less fluid and more fat in body cells. Alcohol is distributed in body fluids and is therefore more concentrated in a woman's system causing them more potential and more rapid organ damage. Around the time of a woman's period, they also may get intoxicated faster.
- The amount of alcohol in a drink is important not its type. e.g. beer, spirits.
- Alcohol interacts negatively with more than 150 medications. If you are taking antihistamines for a cold, for example, you will increase the drowsiness the medication can cause by drinking. Some painkillers along with alcohol cause added liver damage.

Benefits of drinking less:

Which of these could apply to you?

I will live longer-probably between five and ten years.

I will sleep better.

I will be happier.

I will save a lot of money.

My relationships will improve.

I will achieve more in my life.

I will be better at my job.

I will be less likely to feel depressed.

Other people will respect me.

I will be less likely to get into trouble with the police.

The possibility that I will develop liver disease will be dramatically reduced (12 times less likely).

I will probably find it easier to stay slim, since alcoholic beverages contain many calories.

I will be less likely to develop heart disease or cancer.

Your Notes

Some alcohol fairy-tales

There are a number of myths, which have developed over the years and in most cases are far from the truth.

Seperate the facts from the fiction

Myth - Alcohol is a stimulant. It lifts you when you are depressed.

Fact - Alcohol is depressant. It removes inhibitions giving the impression it is a stimulant. It is a depressant drug that taken in large amounts "puts the brain to sleep".

Myth - Alcohol warms you up. It can be good for a cold.

Fact - Alcohol cures nothing. The calories released by the burning of alcohol seem to make you feel warmer, but the body actually loses heat. Drinking excessively leaves the body open to more infection.

Myth - Drinking black coffee will help sober you up.

Fact - Nothing speeds the liver up in dealing with alcohol. Remember 1 unit per hour. Coffee is a stimulant, which may make you feel more alert. Instead of being sleepy and drunk, you may just be alert and drunk.

Myth - If a person sticks to beer, they will never become dependent.

Fact - Alcohol, no matter what package it comes in, is an addictive drug. You can become dependent through drinking any type of alcohol or mixture of alcoholic drinks excessively.

"Habit is habit, and not to be flung out by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time."

Mark Twain

To remind you of the steps you can take:

- Think through your decision to change
- Weigh up the cost and benefits
- Set a goal
- Set achievable targets
- Reward yourself for success
- Ask for help if you need it.

Your Notes

WELL DONE

ALCOHOL and you

If you have worked through this book and tried to change your drinking patterns - WELL DONE!

- Any reduction can reduce harm
- Think about how you could reward yourself if you make progress towards your goal
- What would give you that reward that keeps your efforts going?

1 .....

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2 .....

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3 .....

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Where can I get help ?

Each of the Northern Ireland Drug and Alcohol Coordination Teams (DACTs) in each of the five Health Trusts areas have produced a directory of local services in their area. They can be located on The Public Health Agencies website at www.publichealth.hscni.net

We also provide

Alcohol Clinic's, Counselling Service and a Family Intervention Service

You can get access to these by calling: 028 9260 4422.

Take it further online.
Free self-help tools and resources.
www.alcoholandyouni.com

Original booklet developed by

Ed Sipler
Health Development Specialist in
Alcohol, Drugs and Behaviour Change
Down Lisburn Trust and
Ulster Community & Hospitals Trust

Eileen Hutson
Alcohol Liaison Nurse Specialist
Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust

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TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF ALCOHOL