

APPENDIX 33 – ALCOHOL AND DRUGS PROBLEMS POLICY

This statement of policy and procedure has been agreed with UNISON, and is set out here for the information and attention of staff.

The Policy

NICVA recognises that an alcohol or drug problem is primarily a health problem.

Any staff member who suspects they have a problem is encouraged to seek help voluntarily. This request should be made to the Chief Executive on a personal basis. This request will be treated in strict confidence and will in no way jeopardise the employee's job security. Time off work to obtain help will be offered if necessary and during this time they can be put on sick leave and be entitled to normal sickness benefits as provided in the Conditions of Service. If the member of staff is the Chief Executive, this request should be made in person to the Chairperson.

A staff member who is identified as having a problem through observations or by normal procedures following poor work performance, absenteeism, etc, will be given the opportunity to seek diagnosis and specialist help as a result of the initial discussion with the Chief Executive. There will be no demotion or retribution unless matters of discipline are involved.

The decision whether or not to receive treatment is ultimately the responsibility of the NICVA staff member. However, continuing unsatisfactory levels of behaviour or performance may be subject to normal disciplinary procedures if the employee declines to accept referral for diagnosis or specialist help.

Should relapse occur following a return to employment after completion of a recovery programme, sympathetic consideration will be given to the granting of further sick leave, though this cannot be continued indefinitely.

Staff with an addiction problem should be assured that every assistance will be given to them if they are willing to try to overcome the problem and that the matter will be treated in strict confidence.

In cases where the employee is incapable of retaining his or her present job or where returning to post would, on professional advice, undermine recovery, every reasonable effort will be made to find alternative employment within the organisation.

An employee will have the right to be represented by the union or staff member at each stage of the proceedings.

Note

This policy does not constitute a waiver of NICVA management's responsibility to maintain discipline or right to take disciplinary action under existing agreements, nor does assistance under the policy prevent recourse to normal grievance or redress procedures.

Procedure

- (1) When a member of staff believes he/she has a problem with addiction, that person should seek help as soon as possible by means of an initial interview with the Chief Executive. Where the employee is the Chief Executive, then they should seek an interview with the Chairperson.
- (2) If NICVA suspects a problem through a pattern of deteriorating work performance and/or absenteeism, the Chief Executive will then arrange an informal interview with the staff member concerned, who will have the right to be represented by another member of staff or union representative if desired. The interview will be confined to aspects of work performance only. If the staff member refuses to meet the Chief Executive and if there is no improvement in the level of work performance, then there will be a meeting with the Executive Committee or appointed sub-committee thereof who will appraise the situation and offer the staff member a final choice between accepting help or being subject to the disciplinary consequences. If the staff member is still reluctant to accept help then appropriate action will be taken by the Executive Committee if necessary.
- (3) It is necessary that the position regarding confidentiality be clearly understood by everyone involved in order to avoid difficulties arising with the relationship between the individual concerned, the employing organisation and the outside treatment agency. Referral to an outside agency may not occur in every case. In most cases however outside referral will at least be offered. The normal practice of counselling or treatment agencies is that they provide information to third parties only with the informed consent of the client. In cases where a staff member seeks help of their own initiative and completely voluntarily, the Executive Committee will of course have no right to any information whatever from the helping agency other than:
 - (i) The picture of the general prognosis.
 - (ii) The length of time needed for treatment/counselling visits.