

APPENDIX 34 – HIV AND AIDS POLICY

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the human immune system, which is the body's defence against disease. A person with HIV may feel completely well and have no symptoms, however in time a person with HIV may develop particular illnesses or cancers because their immune system is weakened. When this happens, the person is said to have AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

How Do People Become Infected with HIV?

In order for a person to be infected with HIV, a sufficient amount of HIV must enter their bloodstream. HIV is found in some, but not all body fluids. The body fluids that contain enough HIV to infect someone are:

- Blood.
- Sperm and seminal fluid.
- Vaginal fluids, including menstrual fluids.
- Breast milk.

The body fluids that do not contain enough virus to infect someone are:

- Saliva.
- Sweat.
- Urine.
- Tears.

Infection is not spread through the air (for example by sneezing or coughing) or by touch, nor is there any danger of infection from handling objects which have been used by infected persons or from sharing an office or toilet facilities with them. Current medical opinion indicates that the risk of becoming infected with HIV in virtually all occupations is very low. Everyday normal social and work contact is perfectly safe.

NICVA to the best of its ability, will fulfill its legal obligations to uphold fair practice in relation to employees living with HIV and AIDS under the Disability Discrimination Act 1996.

A member of staff who knows that they is infected with HIV/AIDS is under no obligation to disclose this fact. They however are obliged to avoid all actions likely to increase the risk of passing on the infection to others. Where an infected member of staff voluntarily chooses to inform the Chief Executive of his/her condition, the information will be kept confidential **unless the individual wishes him/her not to do so**. A member of staff shall suffer no loss of an employee's rights through disclosure that he/she is infected with HIV.

In so far as they require time off for medical consultations, treatment or counselling by approved counsellors, whether in the Health and Social Services or in a reputable voluntary organisation, the provisions in the Staff Handbook for paid time off shall be sympathetically and sensitively applied.

Staff Attitudes to Infected Colleagues

Where it is generally known amongst NICVA staff that a colleague or colleagues are infected by HIV, it shall be expected of staff both by NICVA and UNISON that they shall treat those colleagues no differently than other colleagues.

NICVA and UNISON whilst confident that NICVA staff will be, and will remain, positive and helpful to colleagues infected by HIV, are agreed that any departure from the normal high standards of mutual tolerance towards and respect for colleagues is to be deplored and condemned without equivocation.

It follows from the expectation that instances of the following when investigated and if proven will constitute gross misconduct and may be cause for summary dismissal:

- (1) By words, gestures or actions causing or likely to cause distress to a colleague with HIV infection.
- (2) Refusal to work normally with a colleague with HIV infection.

Precautions Against the Spread of Infection

Since a NICVA employee or visitor to NICVA's offices may be infected with HIV and be unaware of the fact, or being aware of the fact is under no obligation to disclose it, NICVA's staff should at all times observe the following standard hygiene precautions:

- (1) A member of staff undertaking or assisting in first aid should always cover any exposed cuts or abrasions they may have with a waterproof dressing before treating any casualty. They should also wash their hands before and after applying dressings.
- (2) Whenever blood, semen or other bodily fluids have to be mopped up, disposable plastic gloves and an apron should always be worn and paper towels used. These items should then be placed in plastic bags and safely disposed of, preferably by burning.
- (3) HIV is killed by household bleach and the office area in which any spills have occurred should be disinfected using one part of bleach diluted with ten parts of water.
- (4) If direct contact with another person's blood or other bodily fluids occurs, the body area which was in contact should be washed with ordinary soap and water. If the lips, mouth, tongue, eyes or broken skin have been in contact with such body fluids, they should be washed with clean cold water, and medical advice sought as soon as possible afterwards.

- (5) Mouth to mouth resuscitation using mouthpieces available for this purpose should be attempted only by NICVA's first aiders who have been trained in their use. Mouth to mouth resuscitation should never be withheld in an emergency because a mouthpiece is not available. No case of infection has been reported from any part of the world as a result of giving mouth to mouth resuscitation.