

# Infectious Diseases Policy

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Policy Name	Infectious Diseases
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Owner	Senior Leadership Team
Reviewing Body	

## 1. About this policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance in the event of a single confirmed case or a suspected outbreak of an infectious disease within the organisation. Although major outbreaks are rare, the organisation must consider known disease risks and plan to manage and contain the spread of an infectious disease to reduce the threat posed to staff, visitors and clients.
- 1.2 It is not always possible to identify how the infection will be spread; therefore, precautions to prevent the spread of infection must be followed at all times. By following these standard precautions, the chain of infection can be broken and a safe working environment created.
- 1.3 The policy will outline what action is to be taken, by whom and the critical lines of communication needed to ensure a timely, sensitive and professional response. The detail within this policy should not be restrictive, as each event will differ. Given the number of ways, we may be informed of an infectious disease case and the range of potential exposure, the scope of our response and critical staff involved may vary.
- 1.4 It is our policy to communicate with staff, clients and visitors where appropriate and, where necessary, medical authorities and to take proper measures to minimise any spread of infection.
- 1.5 Discrimination against and/or harassment of an employee who has or is suspected to have an infectious disease may result in disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Policy.
- 1.6 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

## 2. Ways infection can spread

2.1 There are many ways infection can spread. Infections can spread faster where staff share close proximity.

2.2 Infection can spread by:

- (a) **Air-borne transmission:** Micro-organisms are spread through the air, for example by coughing or sneezing.
- (b) **Direct contact:** Micro-organisms are spread from person to person or indirectly with an inanimate object that has been previously contaminated.
- (c) **Faecal-oral transmission:** spread from hand to mouth through inadequate handwashing after a toilet visit.

## 3. How to prevent the spread of infection

3.1 To fight against infection, general high standards of cleanliness must be observed. Ways in which the spread of infection can be prevented are:

### (a) Handwashing

Hand hygiene is widely acknowledged to be one of the most important ways of controlling the spread of infection. All staff are required to wash their hands with warm water and soap after using the toilet, blowing their nose and in other appropriate situations. After hand washing, hands must be dried thoroughly as wet surfaces transfer organisms more effectively than dry ones.

If employees use hand sanitiser, then an alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be used.

### (b) Social distancing

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing. This is because when someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth, which may contain a virus.

### (c) Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

### (d) Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

(e) **Bins**

It is crucial that tissues and other types of rubbish are disposed of immediately in the appropriate receptacles.

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(f) **If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early**

Stay at home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

**4. Attending our premises and alternative working arrangements**

4.1 Members of staff should observe Government issued guidance where published on the impact of any particular disease or infection and should make a judgement as to their situation concerning travel, attendance at work and any isolation and quarantine arrangements.

4.2 Where it is agreed that a Service User needs to self-isolate or self-quarantine, and there is no family support network available, a risk assessment will be carried out to determine the next steps.

4.3 Members of staff may be refused entry to our premises and/or be required to work from home, where possible, or from an alternative place of work, if available as the organisation deems appropriate. Managers will advise them of any such requirement. Such employees will receive their normal pay.

4.4 Members of staff who can work may sometimes be expected to carry out additional or varied duties during such periods. However, members of staff should not be required to do anything they cannot do competently or safely.

**5. Sickness Absence**

5.1 If you cannot attend work because you are sick or injured or not fit for work due to contracting an infectious disease you should inform the organisation by following the

company sickness absence reporting procedures as outlined in the organisation's Sickness Absence policy.

## **6. Other absence**

6.1 If you are absent as a result of the infectious disease but are not sick or injured, for example, you have been advised by a medical professional or are following government guidance to self-isolate. You should notify the organisation as above.

## **7. Evidence of incapacity**

7.1 You must complete a self-certification form for sickness absence of up to seven calendar days.

7.2 For absence of more than a week, you must provide a doctor's certificate stating that you are not fit for work and giving the reason. If absence continues beyond the expiry of a certificate, a further certificate must be provided.

7.3 If your doctor provides a certificate stating that you "may be fit for work" you must inform your Manager immediately. We will hold a telephone discussion with you about how to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your doctor's advice. If appropriate measures cannot be taken, you will remain on sick leave and we will set a date for review.

## **8. Pay**

8.1 The Company will advise you in relation to your pay, taking into account your specific circumstances and your employment status with the company.

8.2 If you have been signed off work due to an infectious disease, then you may be entitled to SSP or Company Sick Pay in accordance with the organisation sick pay procedures.

8.3 Employees who are absent from work due to infectious diseases and who are not eligible for SSP are not entitled to be paid for the time lost.

## **9. If you are not entitled to Company Sick Pay but do qualify for SSP**

9.1 SSP will be paid according to the prevailing rules. March 2020, SSP is paid from day 1 for the Coronavirus Covid-19.

9.2 Absence [in all other cases] can be treated in a variety of ways. Employees should discuss their preference with their Manager, who retains overall discretion in the matter. These options are set out below:

- (a) Treating the absence as annual leave.
- (b) Treating the absence as special unpaid leave.

9.3 If, in exceptional circumstances, we decide to close the workplace, employees will be paid as if they had worked their normal hours.

## **10. Return-to-work interviews**

10.1 After a period of absence, your Manager will hold a return-to-work interview with you. The purposes may include:

- (a) ensuring you are fit for work and agreeing any actions necessary to facilitate your return;
- (b) confirming you have submitted the necessary certificates;
- (c) updating you on anything that may have happened during your absence;
- (d) raising any other concerns regarding your absence record or your return to work.

## **11. Long term and persistent absence**

11.1 Long term and/ or persistent absence will be dealt with under our Sickness Policy.

11.2 We may ask you to attend a medical examination by a doctor or occupational health professional or other specialist nominated by us (at our expense).

11.3 You will be asked to agree that any medical report produced may be disclosed to us and that we may discuss the contents of the report with the specialist and with our advisers. All medical reports will be kept confidential in accordance with our Fair Processing (Employee Data) Notice.