



MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES ON AIDS/HIV

We will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in another non written format.

Management Guidelines - AIDS/HIV and Employment

PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance to managers in GHA on dealing with employees who are infected by the HIV virus or who have AIDS. These guidelines apply in respect of all GHA employees. For the avoidance of doubt, they do not form part of any employee's contract of employment.

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|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| • Section A | General Principles | Page 2 |
| • Section B | Background | Page 2 |
| • Section C | GHA Commitments | Pages 2-3 |
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SECTION A - GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Employees known to be infected but otherwise in normal health will be not be treated any differently during their employment. Employees developing AIDS will be treated in accordance with the normal GHA procedures for ill or disabled people. GHA is committed to tackling discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation and to ensuring that its practices are not themselves either directly or indirectly discriminatory.

SECTION B - BACKGROUND

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a disease of the human immune system caused by infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Initial infection is typically followed by a prolonged period without symptoms. As the illness progresses, it interferes more and more with the immune system, making the person much more likely to get infections, including opportunistic infections and tumours that do not usually affect people who have working immune systems. There is no cure or vaccine; however, antiretroviral treatment can slow the course of the disease and can lead to a near-normal life expectancy. While antiretroviral treatment reduces the risk of death and complications from the disease, these medications may be associated with side effects which can impair quality of life. Affected persons are infective to others only through sexual intercourse or transfer of blood or serum; the virus isn't transmissible through everyday social contacts, by food handling or through inanimate objects such as cutlery or lavatory seats.

SECTION C - GHA COMMITMENTS

Where an employee is disabled and a suitable alternative position within the Wheatley Group is not available, the employee will be considered for retirement on health grounds. Where the position of employees in contact with the public or customers becomes untenable because of adverse public perception, GHA will consider alternative positions in consultation with the individual concerned. GHA will also consider alternatives where an employee requests to be moved from a role with public/customer contact even without there having been adverse public perception. Only where no suitable alternative is available may their employment be terminated under the appropriate GHA procedure.

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Where an employee's illness is approaching a terminal stage it may be appropriate to suspend any decision to dismiss. This requires careful consideration and should be dealt with sensitively taking account of individual circumstances. Advice should be obtained from Employee Relations.

Candidates suffering from AIDS will be deemed unfit for duties only where their disability is incompatible with the requirements of the job and where there are no reasonable adjustments that can be made to accommodate the disability.

Employees who have been diagnosed as HIV positive should be encouraged to obtain counselling advice and support from a responsible person. Disclosure of such information should be treated in the utmost confidence and relevant employment rights should not be affected. The confidential nature of any records of employees with AIDS should be strictly preserved.

All appropriate precautions should be taken on behalf of those working in close contact with the infected person. There is no risk of infection where there is no contact with blood or other body fluids. GHA will strive to ensure that risks are minimised and that information and training is provided to Employee Relations on the management of any risks.

It is recognised that some groups of employees, due to the nature of their work, may be at risk from sharps injuries etc. Managers should ensure that such risks are kept to a minimum and that information and training are provided to employees regarding measures to deal with any of the risks presented. A detailed procedure has been established and must be implemented where an employee receives a Needlestick/Sharps Injury (see GHA Health and Safety Policy). First Aiders will receive special training and information to enable them to exercise their skills safely.
