

HIV and AIDS Policy

VERSION: JULY 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 We recognise that AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a health issue that has attracted widespread publicity in recent years. It is important that we have clear guidelines regarding AIDS in the workplace and this policy has been developed for the benefit of both employees and managers.

1.2 What is HIV/AIDS?

AIDS is caused by a virus known as HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) which attacks the body's natural defence system and leaves it vulnerable to infections and cancers. Not all individuals who become infected with HIV will necessarily develop AIDS but, at present, those who do develop AIDS will eventually die from their illness.

HIV infection is not acquired through everyday work contact, or by sharing cutlery or toilets with an infected person. Nor can it be caught in the same way as influenza or colds/coughs and sneezes.

Normal social and employment contact with an infected person is safe for both employees and members of the public, as HIV is not spread through this kind of contact

The main means of transmission are:

- during unprotected sexual intercourse with another person who has the virus;
- by taking infected blood into the blood stream for example by contaminated syringes and needles or drug injection;
- by an infected mother to her unborn child.

2. POLICY

2.1 We regard HIV/AIDS in the same way as any other serious illness.

2.2 It is hoped that through the implementation of this policy and the provision of opportunities for individuals to discuss their fears will help to counter misinformation and prejudice before problems arise.

2.3 We will support those individuals who have AIDS or HIV infection through the provision of medical and welfare advice.

2.4 Employees with HIV/AIDS whose performance suffers or who are absent from work because of AIDS will be handled in the same way as with individuals with any other serious illness. Please refer to our Sickness Absence Policy for details.

- 2.5 There will be no discrimination in the provision of any benefits, subject to the rules of the scheme currently in force, or any services provided and/or administered by us on the grounds that an employee is infected with HIV.
- 2.6 We will not normally require potential or existing employees to take a test for HIV antibodies. We do, however retain the right to do so if the nature of the work is such that an infected post holder would constitute a risk under Health and Safety legislation.
- Current procedures for determining medical fitness on recruitment will continue to apply.
- 2.7 No employee will be dismissed purely on the grounds that they have HIV infection or AIDS or because they might be thought to be especially at risk. However, where an employee becomes medically unfit to perform their duties they will be subject to our current procedures as outlined in the Sickness Absence policy.
- 2.8 An employee who becomes infected with HIV or who develops AIDS is not required to inform us unless they wish to do so; however current rules for the certification of absence due to sickness will continue to apply.

Anyone wishing to seek help may do so through their Manager or the HR department and will be assured of complete confidentiality. If disclosure of information about an individual who has HIV or AIDS is necessary, it will only take place after authorisation has been sought from the person concerned.

- 2.9 Any information regarding an employee relating to AIDS will be kept in the strictest confidence.
- Disclosure of confidential information relating to HIV or AIDS related illness in the absence of authorisation from HR may lead to disciplinary action and/or dismissal.
- 2.10 No employee will be redeployed to alternative duties solely because they have HIV or AIDS, unless it is in the interests of their own safety or that of others.
- 2.11 It is our policy that employees will not discriminate, against any person, on unlawful or unreasonable grounds. It would therefore be contrary to this policy to victimise or to refuse to work with another employee or to refuse to provide services to a customer or visitor because of fears that they might have HIV or AIDS.
- 2.12 All employees will be expected to work normally with a colleague who has or is suspected of having HIV or AIDS. Any employee who refuses to work normally with people suffering from AIDS or who are HIV positive will be interviewed to find out the circumstances of their refusal and if appropriate may dealt with under the Diocese's disciplinary procedure.

3. TRAINING, EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Appropriate training and information will be provided on request, by the HR department. This is intended to overcome unfounded fears and prejudices, to promote good health and safety practices, to increase awareness of the necessary personal precautions and to promote awareness of the policy.
- 3.2 First Aiders will receive specialist advice as part of their training in order to protect themselves and others against the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. This will include instruction in the appropriate techniques to be followed when treating injured persons, when dealing with open or bleeding wounds and when administering artificial respiration.

- 3.3 The Care First Employee Assistance Programme is available for use by all Diocesan staff and can provide information and support on 0800 174319.
- 3.4 Health and safety guidelines will be reviewed as necessary to take account of any special considerations relating to HIV/AIDS.

4. FURTHER COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

- 4.1 The HR department at Bishop's House, Hove, is available to any employee wishing to consult it on any matter relating to HIV or AIDS.
- 4.2 It is recognised that those with AIDS or HIV infection may require specialised forms of counselling. We will assist in the provision of skilled counselling by liaising with the specialised agencies.

Approval

This policy was approved by the Diocesan Board of Trustees on:	8 July 2020
The next review is due by:	31 July 2022