

INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

1 Introduction

The Council has developed this policy on minimising the risk of infectious diseases spreading in the workplace through effective prevention and management.

The policy seeks to ensure that employees are aware of the issues relating to infectious diseases at work and provides guidelines for managers and others on minimising the risk of employees contracting diseases through work and on dealing with infections if contracted. Infectious diseases can be airborne (for example, meningitis or TB), blood borne (for example, hepatitis) and faecal-oral borne (for example, gastroenteritis).

2 Business case

Infectious diseases emerge and spread quickly across the world as a result of global travel and other interconnections. Workplaces are an effective incubator for disease, particularly if hygiene and infection control is poor or if employees go to work when sick.

Infectious diseases can have a potentially significant impact on the business. An employee off sick with a flu-related illness is typically absent for six days. As well as the direct costs of infection-related sickness absence, there are also indirect costs associated with lost productivity, damaged customer confidence and poor service levels.

3 Minimising the risk of disease transmission

The council has a duty of care to maintain a healthy and safe working environment. This includes taking steps to minimise the risk of employees contracting an infectious disease from colleagues, customers or clients.

The council will promote awareness and understanding of the issues and concerns relating to the transmission of infectious diseases in the workplace, including risks associated with more serious infections such as measles and mumps.

To this end, the council will provide authoritative information on the nature and spread of common infectious diseases, including how to identify the symptoms and signs and the procedures to be followed in the event of

individual illness or an outbreak affecting a significant number of employees.

4 When employees have contracted infectious diseases

Employees with infectious diseases will not be excluded from work, nor have their duties restricted, as long as they are physically and mentally fit for work and their continued attendance in the workplace does not present a significant risk of disease transmission to other employees, customers or clients.

The decision as to whether or not an employee with an infection should stay away from the workplace will take into account:

- how the infection is transmitted and the ease of transmission;
- the typical duration of the infection; and
- the potential harm that the infection can cause to other employees, customers or clients.

Employees have a responsibility to minimise the risk of disease transmission to work colleagues, customers and clients and are expected to perform good hygiene control measures and use personal protective equipment where provided.

5 Standard hygiene practices at work

The Council will develop routine procedures for hygiene control, taking into account professional guidelines and advice from statutory bodies, such as the Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency.

The council will take steps to raise employee's awareness of these procedures through education, training materials and induction sessions.

Employees are encouraged to adopt effective hand hygiene practices and to sterilise shared kitchen utensils where appropriate.

6 Personal protective equipment

Employees issued with personal protective equipment to minimise the risk of work-related infection should use it appropriately and clean their hands immediately after removing items such as gloves and facemasks.

7 Disease outbreak

In the event of a disease outbreak affecting a significant number of employees, a working group of line managers and other designated individuals will be formed to monitor and coordinate activities to control the outbreak. The work of this group will include developing work rules in the event of an outbreak, including exclusions/restrictions from work and the reassignment of duties.