

# Working with Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs) Policy

## What are Blood Borne Viruses?

Blood Borne Viruses are **viruses** that some people carry in their **blood** and can be spread from one person to another. The three main blood borne viruses are Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B (HBV) and Hepatitis C (HCV).

## Purpose of identifying & managing HCWs infected with BBVs:

- Not intended to prevent them from working in the NHS but provide protection for patients by establishing BBV fitness criteria for HCWs employed in, or applying for posts involving Exposure Prone Procedures (EPPs) where their infection may pose a risk to patients in their care.
- Intended to provide advice on key operational and service delivery issues that need to be addressed to ensure HCWs living with BBVs who perform EPPs are managed in a manner that safeguards their confidentiality and employment rights.<sup>1</sup>

## What are Exposure Prone Procedures (EPPs)?

Exposure Prone Procedures are defined as invasive procedures where there is a risk that injury to the worker may result in the exposure of the patient's open tissues to the blood of the worker. They include procedures where the worker's gloved hands may be in contact with sharp instruments, needle tips or sharp tissues (e.g. sharp spicules of bone or teeth) inside a patient's open body cavity, wound or confined

## Aims of the Working with BBV policy:

- Control the risk to patients and staff from HCWs infected with BBVs
- Control the risk to HCWs from BBV infected patients and to reinforce good practice.
- Outlines how NHS Lothian will ensure compliance with the Scottish Government's guidance on health clearance for HCW for BBV (HBV, HCV and HIV).

## Roles and responsibilities:

### Individuals:

- All HCW involved in clinical roles have a professional duty to protect patients
- All HCWs involved in clinical care should be aware of the procedures outlined in this policy and comply fully with them.
- Individuals who believe they may have been exposed to a BBV must seek medical advice
- Prospective staff must comply in full with BBV screening requirements as failure to do so will determine that the individual will not be employed or allowed to work with NHS Lothian. If appointed, disciplinary action may result if it is discovered that test result misrepresented their BBV status.

### Line Managers (Service managers/ Heads of Departments / Clinical Directors:

- They are responsible for assessing all their clinical posts
- Identifying posts that involve EPP (as defined above) and designating them as such.
- Maintaining current lists of posts involving EPP in their areas.
- Must ensure that individuals selected for EPP posts do not commence EPP until clearance is provided by the OHS via the relevant recruitment department.

### Recruitment and pre-employment teams:

- Inform all prospective clinical HCW of NHS Lothian policy for staff who believe they may have been exposed to BBV
- Inform all prospective EPP staff of NHS Lothian policy for pre-employment BBV screening requirements, which they must complete prior to commencing the relevant post

### The Occupational Health Service (OHS):

- Must assess the BBV status of all prospective EPP staff notified to OHS through the recruitment process.
- Inform the HCW of the results of their evaluation, including the provision of advice on the implications for future employment.
- Where the HCW is already employed by NHS Lothian in another post, the OHS will review their continued fitness for this post based on the new information
- When the pre-employment testing is carried out by NHS Lothian OHS, the service is responsible for advising the HCW on the need for further specialist or GP referral.

The BBV status of all HCWs is subject to the same rights of medical confidentiality as any patient in receipt of medical care or investigation.

### Redeployment Process

Where OHS assessments of existing staff determines that the HCW is unfit for their employed role or identifies the need to modify practice, the Employee Relations advisor, in liaison with Partnership representatives, will work with the manager to arrange suitable alternative work which may involve referral to the NHS Lothian Redeployment Policy.<sup>2</sup>

### The NHS Lothian Needlestick Injury

Management procedure provides a practical step by step guide on the steps to take after a potential exposure to BBVs following a needlestick injury or a contamination incident.<sup>3</sup>

### References:

1. Integrated guidance on health clearance of healthcare workers and the management of healthcare workers living with bloodborne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/909553/Integrated\\_guidance\\_for\\_management\\_of\\_BBV\\_in\\_HCW.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909553/Integrated_guidance_for_management_of_BBV_in_HCW.pdf)
2. NHS Lothian Redeployment Policy <http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/HR/hrpolicy/Redeployment/Pages/Redeployment.aspx>
3. NHS Lothian Needlestick Injury Management procedure <https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/Policies/Procedure/Needlestick%20Managment%20Procedure.pdf>