

## **Code of Conduct**

### **3.1.0 General**

The Code of Conduct sets out a policy to clarify issues of behaviour and conduct for staff. The Code of Conduct is a crucial part of the Contract of Employment. Failure to comply with any part of its provisions may lead to the initiation of the disciplinary policy and procedure. The Code also applies to temporary and volunteer staff.

3.1.1 It is the policy of the Organisation to consistently conduct its business with honesty and integrity and in compliance with all legal and ethical standards, together with established Organisation policies. All staff are obliged to fulfil their obligations under their contract of employment. This includes fulfilling our responsibilities and at all times providing a service at least to the standards set out in our policies and procedures for residents and clients, the public, funders and colleagues. *At all times employees are to act in a professional manner and not bring the organisation into disrepute.* In particular clients are at all times to be treated with respect, addressed in a civil manner and consistent with the values and objectives of Novas .

3.1.2 All employees are required to protect Novas confidential business information and not disclose it to other parties. You may not remove any documents or items belonging to Novas or which contain any confidential information from the Organisation's premises at any time without proper advance authorisation.

3.1.3 Employees must declare in writing any potential conflict of interest that might affect their impartiality in carrying out their duties.

### **3.2 Confidentiality**

3.2.0 Confidentiality especially about clients/ residents is critically important. It is essential that policies and procedures on confidentiality are observed as abuse of a client's trust is a serious matter.

3.2.1 Staff cannot under any circumstances, use any information about a client/ resident for anything other than the purpose/s for which the information was gained and authorised and also in compliance with any agreement with the client/ resident about the disclosure of personal information (e.g. HNA agreement), or as provided for in the relevant policies/procedures or as required by law. Discussions by staff about clients or residents etc. must only be held during working hours in the appropriate setting and dealt with in a professional manner.

3.2.2 Staff shall not use, publish or be a source of any information about any resident, client, colleague, Board member, funder or the operation of the project or generally about Novas unless they are spokespersons authorised by the Chief Executive Officer. Enquiries from the media can only be dealt with by spokespersons in accordance with the Communications Policy.

3.2.3 Staff shall not under any circumstances, take any recording, whether video or voice, of any resident, Client, colleague, Board member, contractor or any other party while on Novas property or at any place during the course of their working hours or when representing the Company or at any event organised by the Company unless expressly authorised to do so by a member of the

Senior Management Team. If an employee wishes to record a meeting or event they should seek the prior written approval of the Head of Personnel and Legal. Any breach will be dealt with under the Company Disciplinary Policy and may result in summary dismissal.

- 3.2.4 If an enquiry is received from the Gardaí, the media or other external source (other than that which is part of the everyday established procedures with voluntary/ statutory partners), the Project Manager is to be informed and will deal with the matter. If the enquiry is made outside normal hours the matter is to be referred to the manager-on-call who will similarly decide on the matter.
- 3.2.5 Personal information about present or former employees, including private telephone numbers/email addresses, will not be made known except where there is a statutory requirement to do so, or where the person has left written instructions authorising the release of such information.

### **3.3 Personnel Files**

- 3.3.0 Personnel files containing personal and employment details are the confidential property of Novas.
- 3.3.1 Each employee's personnel file will include personal and employment information including that held on computer; e.g. probation reports, supervision notes and any complaints and disciplinary issues. The Project Manager will be responsible for the person's personnel file and the contents will be confidential to the person and manager/s nominated by the Head of Homeless Services, Office Administrator and the Personnel Manager.
- 3.3.2 An individual's master file is also confidential and is the responsibility of the Head of Homeless Services. No person, other than the individual, the Head of Homeless Services and Personnel Manager, will have access to the complete file, although relevant managers will have access to certain information at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.
- 3.3.3 After giving reasonable notice, an employee will be able to inspect her/his own personnel file and/or master file during normal office hours. For the personnel file, notice is given to the Project Manager and for the master file, notice is given to the Head of Homeless Services. Application to inspect such personal information is made in writing and access will be arranged within 20 working days. Employees who are dissatisfied with the information contained in the file/s can contact The Head of Personnel and Legal Affairs. If agreement cannot be reached the employee has the right to invoke the Grievance Procedure. Employees who disagree with the accuracy of information contained on these files may record their disagreement on the file or invoke the grievance procedure.
- 3.3.4 All employees must notify the Personnel Administrator and their local Manager of any change pertaining to their employment record (e.g. change of address).

### **3.4 Personal Interest**

- 3.4.0 Employees must ensure that their private, personal, political and financial interests do not compromise and are not in conflict with their professional duties and/or work on behalf of Novas. Should the possibility of this arise the CEO, Head of Homeless Services, Head Of Finance or Head of Personnel and Legal are to be informed without delay. Also, the staff member (or their immediate family or friends) must not personally benefit from their connections with

the organisation. Employees must disclose any such interests they may have. Such disclosure of personal interests would include for example: personal relationships, private work, material gain and membership of statutory bodies or other voluntary groups.

- 3.4.1 Matters arising where the person has a private or personal interest must be reported without delay. If an employee has to deal with any matter in which s/he has a private or personal interest, however slight, they must inform the appropriate person in writing in advance. Where this arises staff and managers must notify the Head of Personnel and Legal; members of the senior management team must notify the CEO; and if it affects the CEO s/he must notify the Chair/ Board. Failure to do so will be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

### **3.5 Professional Boundaries**

- 3.5.0 Due to the nature of our work, employees and clients are frequently in close contact and may seek or gain confidences. Clients must at all times be treated in a friendly and respectful way. It is also essential that relationships at all times are maintained entirely on a professional footing. A personal or intimate relationship outside work with a client is unprofessional and potentially a **gross breach** of this code. This also applies to former clients who have been in contact with any Novas service within the previous 24 months. It may also apply in certain situations to the immediate family of a current or past client.

Where the staff member is, or has been, a client within the previous 24 months the issue of boundaries will be clarified with the Manager and Head of Homeless Services. If a staff member is unclear on boundaries with clients etc. this they are to discuss this with their manager in the first instance.

- 3.5.1 Employees must perform their duties conscientiously, without favour, in accordance with the policies and procedures and with regard to the interests of Novas and their colleagues as well as to those of the residents and clients. They must not discriminate against any individual or group on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, cultural background, disability, age or sexual orientation. They must never use language which could reasonably give offence, such as abusive/ dismissive, racist and sexist terms. Bullying and harassment are also unacceptable.
- 3.5.2 Clients can be vulnerable and lonely and may read more into the actions, words or behaviour of employees than is intended. All staff must ensure that relationships with clients, and potential clients, of Novas, and clients of related agencies are at all times entirely professional. Employees must never enter into any financial arrangements with residents or clients.
- 3.5.3 Relationships with colleagues at work must at all times be maintained on a professional footing. We recognize that, from time to time, close personal relationships may develop between members of staff, management. In order to ensure that potential conflicts of interest are avoided, members of staff who are in that position are strongly recommended to advise their project manager or Head of Personnel and Legal. *Any such information will be treated in the strictest confidence. We fully acknowledge the right of employees to privacy in their personal affairs.* However Novas retains the right to ensure that two people with a personal relationship shall not be permitted to work in a position or department, where it is deemed inappropriate, especially where one person would directly or indirectly supervise another or where there is the possibility of a conflict of interest.

Management will make appropriate working arrangements including the possible transfer of one of the staff members or change in shift arrangements. The decision will have regard to the best interests of the clients, staff team and the

service. If the situation applies to a member of the senior management team, it is to be reported to the CEO; if it applies to the CEO, it is to be reported to the Chairperson of the Board. In each case the reporting is to be done without delay.

- 3.5.4 Socialising with colleagues outside work is of course a matter for individual staff members. However discussing matters affecting clients, personal or professional, is not acceptable and breaches this Code.
- 3.5.5 If an intimate relationship existed before the staff member/s began employment with the organisation, involving a client, another staff member or Board member and it is possible for this previous relationship to in any way impinge on the work or professionalism of the staff member or other person, then this must be made known to the Project Manager, Head of Homeless Services or Head of Personnel and Legal without delay.
- 3.5.6 It is essential that professional boundaries and conduct as described above is observed by every staff member at all times. Failure to do so can lead to disciplinary action.

### **3.6 Smoking**

- 3.6.0 The company is committed to providing a healthy work environment for its employees. Second-hand smoke is a known carcinogenic health hazard and therefore, it will be treated in the same manner as any other health hazard.
- 3.6.1 There is a statutory ban on Novas staff smoking in Company premises, this includes while driving for work, and smoking is strictly prohibited in work vehicles but also in your own vehicles when driving for work. Current legislation imposes a €3,000 fine on employers whose employees smoke in an enclosed work environment including Company vehicles. While managers are responsible for ensuring strict compliance with this policy, all employees share in the responsibility for adhering to and enforcing this policy. The disciplinary procedure will be used should any employee choose not to adhere to this policy.
- 3.6.2 The smoking ban also applies to everyone, including clients, using *common areas* within buildings. This means for example that corridors, lobby areas and reception areas of exempted buildings such as apartment blocks, hotels and hostels are also covered by the ban. Residents in residential services are permitted to smoke in certain designated smoking areas Staff, guests (anyone who is not a resident) in the premises are not allowed to smoke in these areas.

For the avoidance of doubt the smoking ban extends to electronic smoking devices.

- 3.6.3 Novas is not obliged to provide smoking breaks for employees, and strongly discourages staff from smoking. However arrangements for staff may, at the absolute discretion of the manager, be drawn up locally by management with the agreement of non-smoking employees. Any time permitted for smoking away from the premises is entirely discretionary and may be withdrawn at any time. Where there are arrangements they must ensure that smoking does not occur on the premises or at the immediate proximity of entrances/ exits including where the public have access. Also work must not be impeded or disrupted in any way, and any time permitted is to restrict smoking opportunities to the minimum.

- 3.6.4 Novas cannot under any circumstances accept responsibility for fines under the smoking ban incurred by you. The cost of these fines if not paid may be deducted from salary/pay.

### **3.7.0 Gifts**

- 3.7.1 The utmost discretion must be exercised by all employees in their relationships with outside individuals or firms, particularly suppliers or contractors. Any gifts offered should be declined. If a gift is made, the line manager is to be informed for a decision on what to do; a gift to a member of the senior management group will be reported to the CEO and if a gift is made to the CEO, it is to be reported to the Chairperson of the Board. Normally, gifts will not be retained by a staff member for use by that person.

- 3.7.2 Any gift, offer or irregular suggestion made in connection with a contract or job or made with the aim of obtaining preferential treatment must be reported to the line manager or member of the senior management group immediately.

- 3.7.3 It is of course contrary to this policy for any person representing Novas to offer gifts to outside individuals or firms including funders, suppliers or contractors. If an employee believes a gift should be offered for outstanding service to the work of Novas this must first be approved by the Board.

### **3.8 Hospitality**

- 3.8.0 Before attending any function organised by an outside body, employees should consult their line manager. Authorised attendance in an official capacity at a function (where the staff member is invited due to their employment with Novas), is acceptable. The invitation of hospitality from a private individual or company standing to benefit from the goodwill of the organisation should be avoided and any invitation declined. If the situation could not reasonably have been predicted beforehand, then the employee will as soon as possible thereafter set out the circumstances and events in writing to their line manager. (In the case of the CEO this will be to the chair of the Board).

- 3.8.1 Dealing directly (or indirectly) with an individual or company related to our work should be confined to normal business settings and arrangements and in a professional manner.

### **3.9 Outside Activities**

- 3.9.0 Employees may not undertake any employment activity including in an unpaid capacity outside Novas without first receiving the prior written approval of the line manager. In particular, no work or employment other than for the Novas may be carried out during the person's normal hours of work liability unless agreed in advance.

- 3.9.1 Any payment, whether financial or otherwise, earned by an employee as a result of activities performed for another body, whilst acting as an employee of Novas must be reported to your line manager. Normally it will be payable to Novas.

### **3.10 Use of Premises**

The organisation's premises, including offices, or equipment are not to be used for the business or purposes of any other organisation, or for personal purposes without the written permission of the Head of Homeless Services/ Head Of Finance in advance.

### **3.11 Personal Property**

Novas does not take responsibility for personal property left or stored on our premises. Personal property is not insured under our insurance policies and no compensation is normally made for loss, theft, or damage. Our insurance also does not cover for privately owned vehicles, or their contents, used on behalf of Novas.

### **3.12 *Employment of Close Relatives/ Friends***

3.12.0 Close relatives and personal friends of existing employees are not debarred from being employed with Novas. However having such a relationship with an employee will not give any advantage to the person seeking employment. Where such a relationship exists it is to be disclosed when the employee becomes aware that the person has applied for a job/ is nominated for a position on the Board/ Committee of the Board.

3.12.1 Close relatives and personal friends of employees may be offered employment subject to their undergoing the normal application process in competition with other applicants. Anyone involved in the recruitment process where a close relative or friend is an applicant must declare their interest in advance to the Personnel Manager. Normally, in these circumstances the person will be substituted.

3.12.2 Close relatives include a person's partner, parent, grand-parent, child, grand-child, brother and sister, close friend. It is the organisation's policy to ensure that close relatives and close friends do not work together (either on the same project or, if this is not possible, same shifts).

3.12.3 The obligations and standards detailed above also apply where suppliers or contractors are close friends or relatives.

### **3.13 *Conduct outside work***

It is primarily a matter for each staff member how they behave outside work. However if a person's actions, behaviour or lifestyle, in the view of Novas management, can reasonably be perceived as bringing the reputation of Novas into dispute, or undermine what the agency is trying to achieve, or adversely affect their work performance / attendance then it can be considered as a breach of this Code and liable to be considered under the disciplinary policy. See also Communications/ IT policy