



Housing | Health | Recovery

# POLICY DOCUMENT

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# REVISION HISTORY

Date Revised	Section	Change	Initial
19/06/2023	all	Initial draft	UD, PG

# POLICY RELATION

Relevant legislation, statutory instrument or guideline	
NOVAS HR00 Staff Handbook and NOVAS VOL00 Volunteer Handbook	✓
NOVAS ORG04 Health & Safety Policy	
NOVAS ORG06 Data Protection Policy	
NOVAS HR07 Dignity & Respect in the Workplace Policy	
NOVAS HR14 Disciplinary Policy	
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Data Protection Act 2018 (Directive (EU) 2016/680)	
WRC Code of Practice on Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2020)	
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work (2022)	
Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005)	
HIQA National Standards for Children’s Residential Centers, <b>Theme 6</b> (Responsive Workforce),	
HSE National Quality Standards for Homeless Services <b>Theme 7</b> (Responsive Workforce)	
AHBRA Quality Standards for Approved Housing Bodies, <b>Standard 1</b> (Governance)	

\*Policies in draft format or under review are applicable until such time as they are replaced by a new policy

## Table of Contents

1	Purpose & Intention .....	3
2	Scope .....	3
3	Principles .....	3
4	Roles and Responsibilities .....	4
5	NOVAS VISION STATEMENT .....	4
6	NOVAS MISSION STATEMENT .....	4
7	NOVAS VALUES.....	4
8	NOVAS POLICIES.....	5
9	INTEGRITY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE .....	5
10	Health & Safety .....	9
11	Delegation & Management.....	10
12	MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT .....	10
13	Addressing Health Issues in Regard to Fitness to Practice.....	11
14	Providing Information about your Conduct & Competence .....	11
15	Confidentiality in Professional Practice .....	11
16	Disclosure of Information to other relevant professionals.....	12
17	Professional Competence .....	12
18	Supervision & Individual Line Management Support Meetings .....	13
19	Keeping your professional knowledge and skills up to date.....	13
20	Relationships with Colleagues.....	13
21	Public Profile .....	14
22	Finance .....	14
23	STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE .....	14
	APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES OF REGULATORY AUTHORITIES (NOT EXHAUSTIVE) .....	15
	APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING.....	16

## 1 PURPOSE & INTENTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide NOVAS staff and volunteers with a clear outline of expected behaviours and practices.
- 1.2 It is intended, through the articulation of our mission, vision and values to demonstrate the standards of practice we expect from our leaders, employees and volunteers.

## 2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This code of conduct applies to the actions and behaviours all NOVAS staff and volunteers.
- 2.2 This code of conduct applies to people from other organisations conducting in-reach services or other contracting services while they are on NOVAS premises or engaging with NOVAS clients or tenants.
- 2.3 An additional Code of Conduct for members of the Board of Directors is in place which is signed by all board members and covers duties and responsibilities as outlined in the Companies Act 2014.

## 3 PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 **Do Good:** The principle of 'do good'. NOVAS employees and volunteers are expected demonstrate with their words and actions the intention to 'do good' for our clients and tenants. While we recognise, given the nature of our work, that some of our clients and tenants do not have positive outcomes, this should not be an intended result of any action by our staff or volunteers.
- 3.2 **Do No Harm:** The principle of 'do no harm'. NOVAS employees and volunteers are expected to 'do no harm' to the reputational, financial, or physical state or possessions of the organisation, any of its staff, volunteers, clients or tenants. If there is a conflict of interests between the wellbeing of a client or tenant and the safeguarding of children or other vulnerable people, safeguarding should take precedence.
- 3.3 **Autonomy:** The principle of 'control by the individual'. NOVAS employees and volunteers are recruited using robust processes to find the most suitable people and

are trained and trusted to perform their functions with integrity and honesty. This trust operates on the basis of delegated control that staff and employees have within their roles.

- 3.4 **Justice:** The principle of 'fairness'. Staff and volunteers behaviours and actions, and the rights of clients and tenants, will be assessed on the basis of fair procedures and natural justice.

## 4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 The NOVAS Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that the strategic goals of the organisation do not conflict with the standards outlined in this policy.
- 4.2 All managers have a duty to monitor employee performance and ensure it is aligned to the standards outlined in this code of conduct and take appropriate action when this code is breached.
- 4.3 The organisation and its managers have a duty of care protect the wellbeing of its employees, volunteers, clients, tenants, reputation and sustainability.
- 4.4 All staff and volunteers have a duty to protect the health and well-being of all NOVAS clients, tenants and colleagues.

## 5 NOVAS VISION STATEMENT

- 5.1 Everyone has their own sustainable home.

## 6 NOVAS MISSION STATEMENT

- 6.1 Promoting social inclusion through housing, health and recovery and providing lasting solutions to homelessness.

## 7 NOVAS VALUES

- 7.1 The NOVAS Values are; Equality, Diversity, Dignity, Strengths-based and Rights Based. Please refer to your handbook for more details about how these values are expressed in our work.

## 8 NOVAS POLICIES

- 8.1 NOVAS policies are living documents that are reviewed and referenced regularly to ensure that actions are in line with defined procedures. Policies are updated every 2 years, but can be updated more frequently due to a change in legislation, best practice or as a result of a new learning.
- 8.2 All NOVAS employees have access to the full live suite of policies through the NOVAS All Staff SharePoint site and are expected to take time during induction to familiarise themselves with their content, and to reference them on a regular basis to ensure compliance.
- 8.3 All NOVAS volunteers will receive a copy of the NOVAS Volunteer Handbook, this HR01 Code of Conduct and Volunteer Policies from their Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteer Coordinators can also provide NOVAS volunteers with a copy of any other organisational policies for review on request.

## 9 INTEGRITY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- 9.1 **Complying with the laws and regulations governing your practice:** All NOVAS employees and volunteers are obliged to comply with the law of the land at all times. All NOVAS employees and volunteers are obliged to familiarise themselves with the relevant policies, standards, best practice frameworks or other related guides, related to their specific duties and responsibilities and to seek clarification without delay from a supervisor for any areas that require clarification (see Appendix 1 for examples of regulatory authorities).
- 9.2 **Carrying out your duties professionally and ethically** you must carry out your duties and responsibilities in a professional, efficient, diligent and ethical way; always behave with integrity, impartiality, and honesty; always act within the law.
- 9.3 **Demonstrating ethical awareness**
- 9.3.1 You must make sure you read and understand this Code of Conduct.
- 9.3.2 You must not enter into any agreement or contract or accept any gifts from clients or tenants.

- 9.3.3 You must take particular care when ethical issues arise. (see Appendix 2 on a suggested methodology for ethical decision making)
- 9.3.4 You must not engage in outside businesses or activities which would in any way conflict with the interests of your function and role.
- 9.3.5 You must disclose any conviction of criminal offences (including under the Probation Act) that you have secured during your Garda Vetting or Criminal Record Self Declaration Process at recruitment (see NOVAS ORG19 Vetting Policy). Subsequent to recruitment, offences which would conflict with the interests of your role must be disclosed to the Head of Human Resources.
- 9.3.6 You have a duty to assist in the efficient and effective use of resources and to give advice on their appropriate allocation. While balancing a duty of care to the individual client or tenant, you should be aware of the wider need to use limited resources efficiently and responsibly. Such awareness should inform decision making in your practice.
- 9.3.7 Any letters of advocacy written by NOVAS staff or volunteers on behalf of clients or tenants must be stored on file and approval must be received in advance by the staff members line manager or volunteers coordinator.
- 9.4 **Demonstrating professional accountability:** You must be prepared to explain and account for your actions and decisions and act in the best interests of clients and tenants.
- 9.4.1 You must:**
- 9.4.1.1 treat clients and tenants as individuals;
  - 9.4.1.2 respect diversity, different cultures and values and not condone, facilitate or collaborate with any form of discrimination;
  - 9.4.1.3 respect and, where appropriate, promote or advocate the views and wishes of clients and tenants;
  - 9.4.1.4 support client and tenant rights to access services and to make informed choices about the services they receive;
  - 9.4.1.5 help clients and tenants to reach informed decisions about their lives and promote their autonomy. Any action which diminishes clients or tenants civil or legal rights must be ethically, professionally and legally justifiable;
  - 9.4.1.6 do nothing, and as far as practicable allow nothing to be done, that you believe would risk the health or safety of a client or tenant;

- 9.4.1.7 make clients and tenants aware that their interests may be overridden in circumstances where the client or tenants interest is outweighed by the need to protect others;
- 9.4.1.8 when working in a team, be responsible for your professional conduct, for any service or professional advice you provide and for your failure to act;
- 9.4.1.9 protect clients or tenants if you believe that they are negatively affected by a colleague's conduct, performance or health. The safety of clients and tenants must always come before any personal and professional loyalties;
- 9.4.1.10 discuss the matter with an appropriate professional colleague if you become aware of any situation that puts a client or tenant at risk;
- 9.4.1.11 You may be required to support clients or tenants to take risks to allow them to reach their full potential and well-being;
- 9.4.1.12 be mindful of the effect these risks may have on the client or tenant and on others, particularly children and vulnerable adults;
- 9.4.1.13 avoid conflicts of interest;
- 9.4.1.14 be mindful of the potential social, legal and professional consequences of any act requested of you by a client or tenant;
- 9.4.1.15 uphold the right of clients and tenants to complain, if they wish to do so. You must support the process, consistent with the ORG13 Complaints Policy. You must never attempt to prevent or dissuade a client or tenant from making a complaint about any service with which they are dissatisfied;
- 9.4.1.16 It is generally inappropriate to enter into personal or business relationships with former clients or tenants. If such a situation arises please consult your line manager for guidance without delay.

#### **9.4.2 You must not:**

- 9.4.2.1 engage in a private practice or commercial activities with clients or tenants that you work with in your employment capacity;
- 9.4.2.2 knowingly work with a client or tenant with whom you have, or have had, a personal relationship that may compromise your professional practice;
- 9.4.2.3 abuse a client or tenants trust in order to gain sexual, emotional, financial or any other kind of personal advantage;
- 9.4.2.4 impose your personal beliefs (e.g. political or spiritual) on any client or tenant;
- 9.4.2.5 engage in personal relations with clients or tenants outside of work;

9.4.3 Staff who leave employment with NOVAS and subsequently come into contact with a client or tenant in another capacity should ensure that they do not undermine the relationships the organisation has with the client or tenant. They should disclose that they no longer work with NOVAS.

#### **9.5 Communicating with clients, tenants and professionals**

- 9.5.1 You must make sure that you communicate properly and effectively with client, tenants, and others who support them.
- 9.5.2 You must also co-operate, communicate effectively and share your knowledge and expertise with other professionals and with students for the benefit of clients and tenants.
- 9.6 **Seeking informed consent**
- 9.6.1 You must explain to clients and tenants the intervention that you plan to carry out, the implications involved and any other alternative interventions. You must also take account of the client or tenants capacity to understand the information and to give their consent.
- 9.6.2 Every effort must be made to seek the client or tenant's informed consent for any intervention before it is carried out. In the event that a client or tenant cannot give informed consent, every effort must be made to ensure that any actions taken are in the client or tenants best interests.
- 9.6.3 You must record the client or tenants views with regard to any proposed intervention. The decisions they make with regard to their cooperation or opposition to any such proposed intervention must be shared as appropriate with members of the health or social care team involved in the client or tenants care. In emergencies, you may not be able to explain assessments or interventions, get consent or pass on information to other members of the team. You should at all times act in the best interests of the client or tenant.
- 9.6.4 If a client or tenant refuses assessment or intervention and you believe it is necessary for their well-being, you must make reasonable efforts to persuade them, particularly if there is a significant or immediate risk to their life.
- 9.6.5 If you are working with people under a legal mandate, you must respectfully and clearly communicate in writing your legal responsibilities and any potential consequence for clients of non- cooperation. You must also clarify those matters which are open to negotiation and agreement.
- 9.6.6 You must follow NOVAS ORG36 Confidentiality & Consent Policy and you must also be aware of any guidance issued by appropriate authorities (see Appendix 1 for examples of authorities).



## 9.7 Keeping accurate records

9.7.1 You must keep clear and accurate records according to the policies and procedures in your workplace.

9.7.2 You must keep records for each consenting person who asks for or receives advice or services.

9.7.3 All records must be:

- complete;
- legible (if handwritten);
- identifiable – it should be clear who the author is;
- dated;
- prepared as soon as practicable following intervention;
- clear and factual.

9.7.4 If you supervise students, you must review each student's entry in the records and record that you have done so.

9.7.5 When records are reviewed, you must update them and should note any arrangements for the client or tenants continuing support.

9.7.6 You must make every effort to protect information in records against loss or damage and against access or use by anyone who does not have permission to access or use the records.

9.7.7 When you update records, you must not erase information that was previously there or make that information difficult to read.

9.7.8 You must hold and use records according to relevant legislation.

9.7.9 You have a duty to maintain accurate and up to date records either in manual or electronic form. You are obliged to be aware of your obligations under the Data Protection Acts (GDPR) in relation to secure storage and eventual disposal of such records as well as relevant published Codes of Practice.

## 10 HEALTH & SAFETY

10.1 You must follow risk assessment policies and procedures to assess potential risks in the workplace and area of practice.

10.2 If you identify a risk, you must take the necessary steps to minimise, reduce or eliminate the risk in line with relevant legislation such as the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and your employer's policies, for example, ORG04 Health &

Safety. You must tell relevant colleagues and agencies about the outcomes and implications of risk assessments.

## 11 DELEGATION & MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 People have the right to assume that the person who provides a service to them has the knowledge and skills to do so. When you delegate tasks to someone else, you must be sure that they have knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the tasks safely and competently.
- 11.2 You must not ask another person to perform any task that is outside their knowledge, skills and experience unless they are under the direct supervision of an experienced practitioner.
- 11.3 You are accountable for any task you delegate to another practitioner and responsible for any task you delegate to students or others.
- 11.4 If a person is unwilling to carry out a task because they do not think they are capable of doing so safely and competently, you must not force them to carry out the task. If their refusal raises a disciplinary or training issue, you must deal with this separately. The client or tenant must not be put at risk.

## 12 MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

### 12.1 You must not:

- abuse, harm or neglect client, tenants, volunteers or colleagues;
- exploit or discriminate unlawfully or unjustifiably against client, tenants, volunteers or colleagues;
- form inappropriate personal relationships with client or tenants,
- condone unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination;
- put yourself or other people at unnecessary risk;
- behave in a way that would call into question your suitability to work in housing, health or social care professional services including making comments via social media or other outlets that cause reputational damage to NOVAS, your colleagues, our clients, tenants, volunteers, directors, suppliers, funders or other partners;
- engage in conduct that is likely to damage the public's confidence in you, your profession, or NOVAS;
- lend or borrow money to or from clients or tenants;

- make or receive gifts to or from clients or tenants. Any exceptions to this rule, where a decision is made by a staff member based on a specific circumstance, should be discussed with their line manager;
- sell or purchase items to or from clients or tenants;

#### 12.2 You must:

- work openly and co-operatively with colleagues in the workplace;
- recognise and respect the roles and expertise of practitioners from other agencies or professions and work in partnership with them;
- be reliable and punctual,
- present an appearance that is appropriate for professional relations;
- avoid all acts which are likely to bring the name of NOVAS (or the name of our funders) into disrepute;

### 13 ADDRESSING HEALTH ISSUES IN REGARD TO FITNESS TO PRACTICE

13.1 You must report any health issues that affect your fitness to practice to your line manager. For example, you may need to limit your work or stop practicing if health issues are affecting your conduct, performance or judgement.

13.2 The Organisation reserves the right to refer an employee to an independent medical practitioner at any stage for an independent medical assessment.

### 14 PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CONDUCT & COMPETENCE

14.1 You must raise concerns with the appropriate authority if policies, systems, working conditions or the actions, professional performance or health of you or of others compromise client or tenant care or public safety.

14.2 You must co-operate with any investigation or formal inquiry into your professional conduct.

### 15 CONFIDENTIALITY IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

15.1 You must treat information about clients and tenants as confidential and use it only for the purpose for which you obtained it unless to do so would put the client or tenant or others at risk.

15.2 You must not knowingly release any personal or confidential information to anyone who is not entitled to it except if the law or your professional practice obligations require you to do

so. You must also check that people who ask for information are entitled to it. You must consult with your manager before releasing any such information.

- 15.3 You must only use information about a client or tenant to provide a service to that person or if they have given you specific permission to use the information.
- 15.4 You should consult clients and tenants about their preferences regarding the use of information about them.
- 15.5 You must keep to the conditions of any relevant data protection legislation and follow best practice and relevant agency guidelines for handling confidential information relating to individuals at all times.

## **16 DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO OTHER RELEVANT PROFESSIONALS**

- 16.1 Information may need to be shared with other relevant professionals to provide safe and effective care, for example Gardaí, social workers etc. If disclosure of a client or tenant's information is necessary as part of their care, you should take reasonable steps to ensure that you make such a disclosure to an appropriate person who understands that the information must be kept confidential.

## **17 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE**

- 17.1 You must act within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience.
- 17.2 You should only practice in fields in which you have education, training and experience.  
When accepting a client or tenant, you have a duty of care. This duty includes the obligation to refer them for further professional assessment or intervention if it becomes clear that the task is beyond your knowledge, skills or experience.
- 17.3 If you receive a referral from another health or social care professional, you must make sure that you fully understand the request. You should only assess or intervene if you believe it is right to do so. If this is not the case, you must discuss the matter with the practitioner who made the referral. You should also discuss this with your line manager or volunteer coordinator, and the client or tenant before providing any service.
- 17.4 You must meet relevant standards of practice and work lawfully, safely and competently.

## 18 SUPERVISION & INDIVIDUAL LINE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT MEETINGS

- 18.1 You should seek and engage in one-to-one supervision or support meetings with your line manager, or another suitability qualified person as approved by the Human Resources Department, on an on-going and regular basis. There is a mutual obligation between the line manager and the employee to arrange and participate in supervision.
- 18.2 You must seek support and assistance from your line manager if you do not feel competent to carry out any aspect of your work or if you are unsure about how to proceed in a work matter.

## 19 KEEPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS UP TO DATE

- 19.1. NOVAS will provide and fund all required training for your role. There is an obligation on all staff to engage in all training required for their role.
- 19.2 You must make sure that your knowledge, skills and performance are of a high quality, are up to date and are relevant to your practice.
- 19.3 **You must:**
- Maintain and develop your professional competence by undertaking relevant education and training to improve your knowledge and skills;
  - Keep up to date with relevant knowledge, research methods and techniques so that your service, activities and conclusions will help and not harm others. You can do this, for example, by reading relevant literature, consulting with peers and taking part in continuing education activities;
  - Take part in continuing professional development (CPD);
  - Keep clear and accurate records of CPD by providing copies of your certificates of qualification to your line manager.

## 20 RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

- 20.1 You should maintain professional communications with colleagues at all times.
- 20.2 You should be aware of, and work to, the behavioural standards set out in the HR07 Dignity & Respect Policy.
- 20.3 You must not condone, support, conceal or otherwise enable the unethical conduct of colleagues. Where you are aware of, or have good reason to suspect, misconduct on the part of a colleague this should be discussed with your line manager.
- 20.4 If you are approached by a colleague with a complaint regarding another staff member, you should advise the colleague to address the issue with their line manager.

- 20.5 Where a conflict arises that cannot be managed within the general communications of the service, you should bring this to the attention of your line manager or the Human Resources Department as soon as possible.
- 20.6 Staff are obliged to engage in any meetings or mediation required by the manager in order to resolve any issues arising.

**21 PUBLIC PROFILE**

- 21.1 You are expected to commit to the vision, mission, values and strategic goals of NOVAS in all external communications.
- 21.2 You should only accept invitations to speak on behalf of the organisation with prior permission of the relevant Head of Department. All media contact should conform to medial protocols of NOVAS.

**22 FINANCE**

- 22.1 You should have due regard for state resources to ensure proper, effective and efficient use of public money, and adhere to NOVAS financial policies and procedures.
- 22.2 You should declare any financial interest you have in any organisation or individual with whom NOVAS is carrying out a transaction.

**23 STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE**

I, (INSERT NAME)\_\_\_\_\_, having read and comprehended the expectations outlined in this HR01 Code of Conduct Policy, commit to adhering to these standards for the duration of my involvement with NOVAS.

Name		Role	
Signature		Signing Date	

**APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES OF REGULATORY AUTHORITIES (NOT EXHAUSTIVE)**

This list is for guidance and is not exhaustive.

<b>Charities Regulator</b>	To regulate the charity sector in the public interest to ensure compliance with charity law and support best practice in the governance and administration of charities.	<a href="http://charitiesregulator.ie">charitiesregulator.ie</a>
<b>CORU</b>	Protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence through statutory registration of health and social care professionals	<a href="http://www.coru.ie">www.coru.ie</a>
<b>AHBRA</b>	Providing the regulation of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for the purposes of protecting housing assets provided or managed by such bodies.	<a href="http://ahbraregulator.ie">ahbraregulator.ie</a>
<b>TUSLA</b>	Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is the dedicated State Agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children.	<a href="http://www.tusla.ie">www.tusla.ie</a>
<b>HIQA</b>	Health Information and Quality Authority is an independent authority established to drive high-quality and safe care for people using our health and social care services in Ireland.	<a href="http://www.hiqa.ie">www.hiqa.ie</a>
<b>HSA</b>	The HSA (Health & Safety Authority), under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, regulates the protection of workers and those affected by work activity from occupational injury and illness.	<a href="http://www.hsa.ie">www.hsa.ie</a>
<b>Data Protection Commissioners</b>	National independent authority in Ireland responsible for upholding the fundamental right of individuals in the European Union (EU) to have their personal data protected.	<a href="http://dataprotection.ie">dataprotection.ie</a>
<b>PHECC</b>	The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is an independent statutory body who set the standards for education and training (for example First Aid Responder) for pre-hospital emergency care in Ireland.	<a href="http://www.phecit.ie">www.phecit.ie</a>
<b>Food Safety Authority</b>	Statutory, independent and science-based body, dedicated to protecting public health and consumer interests in the area of food safety and hygiene.	<a href="http://www.fsai.ie">www.fsai.ie</a>
<b>SCI</b>	Social Care Ireland (SCI) is the Professional Representative Body for the Social Care Work Profession in the Republic of Ireland.	<a href="http://socialcareireland.ie">socialcareireland.ie</a>

**APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

1. Define carefully the issues and stakeholders involved.
2. Read this HR01 Code of Conduct and identify all relevant sections. Check if other professional guidelines (for example those of Government departments or the Health Service Executive) or relevant legislation apply. It is also a good idea to consult with your colleagues.
3. Evaluate the rights, responsibilities and welfare of all affected parties.
4. Come up with as many alternative decisions as possible - the more, the better.
5. Evaluate carefully the likely outcome of each decision.
6. Choose what, in your professional judgment, is the best decision, consult with your line manager where appropriate, implement it and inform relevant parties.
7. Keep notes of deliberations at each stage of the process.
8. Finally, take responsibility for the consequences of the decision.