1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Employers have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees.

1.2 Occupational Health relates to the effects that the working environment may have on the health of an employee. It also takes account of the influence that an employee’s health may have on their ability to carry out their work.

1.3 The NIGALA recognises the benefits of good health and will endeavour to promote and maintain the highest degree of physical, mental and social wellbeing of its employees.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THIS BULLETIN

2.1 The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance and detail arrangements for the provision of Occupational Health Services to NIGALA employees.

3.0 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

3.1 The NIGALA Occupational Health Service is provided by BSO to NIGALA employees.

3.2 The NIGALA Occupational Health Service does not apply to self-employed panel members.

4.0 KEY FUNCTIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

- Provide a service which contributes to the business needs of the NIGALA.
- Promote and protect the physical, mental and social wellbeing of all employees of the NIGALA.
- Contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the NIGALA by enhancing employee performance and morale through reducing risks at work that may lead to ill health, staff absences and accidents.
- Provide practical and confidential health support for all employees.
- Advise and assist in the management of employees with either short- or long-term absence including rehabilitation programmes, redeployment and ill-health retirement.
- Support line managers to manage employees with health-related issues.
- Advice on the prevention of ill health at work and assist in the effective management of existing health problems.
Advise both employees and management on the protection of employees against any physical or environmental hazard, which may arise from their work, or from conditions in which it is carried out.

Support and advise accordingly both the employer and employee in any issues pertinent to Occupational Health.

Ensure compliance to any legislation or recommendations pertaining to Occupational Health at work i.e. health surveillance/risk assessment.

### 5.0 Duties/Responsibilities

#### 5.1 Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility to ensure that as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety & welfare of the employees of the NIGALA is maintained.

#### 5.2 Line Managers

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Working in liaison with Occupational Health and act accordingly on any advice given by Occupational Health regarding the employee.
- Ensuring that employees understand the importance of attending any Occupational Health appointments and adhere to any advice or guidance provided by Occupational Health.
- Undertaking the appropriate action if employees do not adhere to NIGALA policies in regard to attending Occupational Health and/or refusal of any treatment deemed necessary.

#### 5.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- Ensuring that they attend for any Occupational Health appointments and on time unless for some exceptional reason they cannot attend. In those exceptional circumstances they must contact a member of the HR Directorate at BSO who will reschedule the appointment.
- Employees should also be aware of the advice, guidance and support available to them by Occupational Health and/or Counselling Service.

### 6.0 Referral

#### 6.1 Self-Referral

NIGALA employees are able to self-refer to the Occupational Health Service. A self-referral can be made by contacting BSO. A consent form is sent out the employee in order to gain the employee’s consent to attend Occupational Health.
The employee signs the form and includes details about the nature of the reason for referral. The employee returns the completed form to BSO. An Occupational Health appointment will then be sent to the employee (via email if at work, or via letter is on sick leave).

**Contact:**
Email: Julie.Redmond@hscni.net
Phone: (028) 95363866

BSO Switchboard: 0300 555 0133

6.2 **MANAGER REFERRAL/REFERRAL FOLLOWING, OR DURING SICKNESS ABSENCE**

NIGALA employees can be referred to the Occupational Health Service by their manager. The manager must ensure that employees are advised a referral to Occupational Health Service is being made, the reasons for it and the questions the Occupational Health professional has been requested to answer.

If there is a common reason for short term absence or where the employee indicates a the return to work interview that they have a medical condition which is contributing to their absence level, a referral should be made to Occupational Health to determine if there is an underlying health problem.

If the employee is on long-term sick leave they are automatically referred to Occupational Health.

7.0 **OUTCOME**

7.1 **MANAGER REFERRAL**

The assessment will result in a written report to the manager, with the consent of employee. Without this consent, the Occupational Health professional will not be able to continue with the assessment or give an opinion to management. It is important to be aware that if an Occupational Health opinion is not given, then management will have to decide what action to take based on the information available to them.

The employee will be advised of the outcome of consultation, the general contents of the report to management, and will be offered a copy of the report. The report will answer any specific questions the manager has asked about the employee’s fitness for work.

In some cases, it may be of significant assistance to the manager and/or the employee to disclose certain agreed details **with the employee’s consent.** (If the Occupational Health professional has been unable to obtain the employee’s consent to disclose agreed details they may still, in very exceptional circumstances, have a professional obligation to disclose information about the employee’s health, but the employee would be informed in the event of such circumstances arising.)
If consent is not received from the employee then no details will be divulged, although the Manager will be advised that consent has been withheld.

On occasion Occupational Health may advise the NIGALA to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate an employee’s return to work. These include:

- Flexible working hours e.g. part-time;
- Temporary redeployment;
- Rehabilitative care e.g. phased return to work, flexible working patterns, career break;
- Remote working (where feasible).

Employees have the right to access the occupational health record and any reports held within it. Further information can be sought from the Occupational Health Service.

7.2 SELF-REFERRAL

If the employee has self-referred to the Occupational Health Service, following appointment and assessment, Occupational Health will provide report to the employee. Confidentiality may not be breached except with the explicit consent of the individual employee concerned.

8.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1 SELF-REFERRAL

Confidentiality may not be breached except with the explicit consent of the individual employee concerned.

8.2 MANAGER REFERRAL

Consent will be obtained from the employee regarding the sharing of Occupational Health report with management.

(If the Occupational Health professional has been unable to obtain the employee’s consent to disclose agreed details they may still, in very exceptional circumstances, have a professional obligation to disclose information about the employee’s health, but the employee would be informed in the event of such circumstances arising.)
9.0 CROSS REFERENCE TO OTHER NIGALA DOCUMENTS

9.1 This bulletin should be read in conjunction with the following NIGALA documentation:

- NIGALA Absence Management Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- NIGALA Disciplinary Policy

10.0 INFORMATION & GUIDANCE

10.1 Further information and guidance by contacting Occupational Health Service at BSO.

10.2 General information regarding Occupational Health can be found on the HSE website:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ohindex.htm