

## Guidance on dealing with Readers or Coaches with HIV or other Blood-Borne Viruses (BBVs)

The following guidance has been drawn from a document produced by the Health and Safety Executive, entitled “Blood-borne viruses in the workplace: Guidance for employers and employees”, which we can send you on request.

### What are the risks for a Read Easy Coach or Reader of working with someone with a BBV?

It is very unlikely that you will become infected through everyday social contact with someone who has a BBV. BBVs are mainly transmitted sexually or by direct exposure to infected blood or other body fluids contaminated with infected blood. In a workplace-type environment, direct exposure can happen through accidental contamination by a sharp instrument, such as a needle or broken glass. Infected blood may also spread through contamination of open wounds, skin abrasions, skin damaged due to a condition such as eczema, or through splashes to the eyes, nose or mouth. However, the Read Easy reading partnership presents a very low risk of any of these eventualities.

People with a BBV should be able to live and work normally, unless they become ill and are no longer fit enough to do their job. If they do become ill, they should be treated in the same way as anyone else with a long-term illness.

### ‘Need to know’

There is no legal obligation for someone to disclose that they have a BBV. However, if a Reader or Coach discloses or is known to have a BBV, this information should be treated as *strictly confidential* (or in data protection terms as ‘Special Categories of Personal Data’) and must not be passed on to *anyone else* without the individual’s permission. In this situation it would be good practice for the Coordinator to:

- request permission to share the information with the other reading partner (as a matter of due diligence in case of an accident occurring), and keep a written record of this permission;
- choose a reading partner who is unlikely to be worried by the situation;
- make it clear to the reading partner that the risk in this situation is minimal;
- provide these notes as guidance, and further information, if requested.

### Should an incident occur

Should an incident occur, such as the type of situation outlined above, where you or someone else is or may be contaminated by bodily fluids, take the following action without delay:

- wash splashes off your skin with soap and running water;
- if your skin is broken, encourage the wound to bleed, do not suck the wound;

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- rinse thoroughly under running water;
- wash out splashes in your eyes using tap water or an eye wash bottle, and your nose or mouth with plenty of tap water – do not swallow the water;
- record the source of contamination and report the incident to your Coordinator;
- seek prompt medical advice.