GUIDELINES RELATING TO THE PROCESS OF WORKING WITH

 PARENTS WHO USE DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL

Drug and alcohol services assess and review all clients at regular intervals and parents should routinely be asked about their parenting and childcare practices. It is important to consider parenting and childcare practices within the context of on-going agency client work and parents with drug/alcohol problems should be treated in the same way as other parents whose personal difficulties interfere with or lessen their ability to provide good parenting.

When assessing children, it is important to look at the drug and alcohol use from the perspective of the child and the impact it has on the child’s life and development. In households where there is drug/alcohol use, consideration should be given as to whether Social Services should be involved.

It should be acknowledged that drug/alcohol use in itself is not a reason for considering a child to be at risk and agencies should only be concerned with the effects drug and alcohol use has on the child’s welfare and development.

**When staff start working with a drug/alcohol using parent they should explain their policy on confidentiality and information sharing. If an agency is concerned that a child may be at risk of significant harm as locally agreed, the practitioner should:**

* inform the client of the concern and discuss the reasons for this (except where telling the client that information is being passed on may result in harm to a child); and
* ask the client for consent to seek help from other services. If this consent is not forthcoming and the agency believes that the child is at risk of significant harm, the agency as a matter of good practice, override the parent’s wishes.