Needlestick and Sharps Policy

2019- 2020

(Reviewed May 2019)
Dealing with needlestick injuries

Introduction
Schools and children’s centres should have appropriate procedures in place to deal with needlestick injuries. Needlestick injuries in schools generally fall into two main categories - injuries from discarded needles, left on the school grounds or found during offsite visits, and injuries from needles/sharps used for medical purposes within some school settings.

This guidance sets out best practice to avoid injury from either source of needlestick and also gives general advice about other injuries from “sharps” that may occur in school. It includes model risk assessments for dealing with discarded needles.

What is the risk?
Discarded needles found on the school site or during offsite visits must be assumed to be contaminated with blood borne viruses (BBVs). Likewise, needles used in school for medical purposes may transmit infection if not disposed of safely immediately after use.

A further infection risk, of tetanus, could arise where persons receive cuts from rusty nails, etc, especially those discarded in soil.

Risk assessment
Schools and children’s centres should consider the hazard from discarded needles and those that may be used for medical purposes in school as part of their risk assessments. Where staff are at particular risk because of their job - e.g. caretaker dealing with discarded needles, or school nurse dealing with medical issues, the risk should be included in job specific assessments.

What to do if you find a discarded needle
If you discover a discarded needle(s) on or near the school site, the first thing you need to do is cordon off the area so that pupils and staff cannot injure themselves. If the school has a sharps and needle collection kit (see below), appropriate staff should use the equipment/personal protective equipment (PPE) in the kit to carefully retrieve the needle and place it in a sharps box to be disposed of, when appropriate, as clinical waste.

If you do not have a sharps and needle collection kit, you should contact the council’s Street Pride team (01922 653344) to arrange removal; ensuring that the site remains cordoned off in the meantime.

If discarded needles are discovered during offsite visits, you should ensure pupils and staff do not handle them, and contact the relevant local authority to report the problem.

Needles/sharps used for medical purposes
Where needles/sharps are used for medical purposes in school, the following rules apply:

- Any staff using needles/sharps or assisting pupils should have appropriate training
- The person using the sharp is responsible for handling the device in a safe manner and for its safe disposal

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Needlestick injuries

- Sharps must not be passed directly between your hands and handling should always be kept to a minimum
- Do not re-sheath needles by hand
- An approved sharps box (British Standard specification BS7320 and UN3291) must be available at point of use
- Dispose of syringes and needles as one unit where possible
- The sharps box must not be overfilled (no more than ¾ capacity)
- Sharps boxes should be kept away from children and the general public
- The temporary closure should be used when the bin is not in use
- The box must be locked and labelled prior to disposal

General good hygiene advice
Where staff may come into contact with BBVs, through needles or dealing with blood spillages, or where there is a risk of infection from tetanus, a high level of personal cleanliness is required. Staff should be told:

- Do not smoke or eat and avoid hand contact with your mouth or eyes until out of the contaminated area and ensure you wash hands with soap and water thoroughly.
- Ensure that all abrasions/cuts are covered with waterproof dressings (sealed at all edges).

Sharps & needles collection kit
Where there is a history of needles being discarded on the school site, it would be prudent for the school to invest in a sharps & needle collection kit. Useful items to have in the kit include:

- Litter picker or grabber, shovel and brush
- Gloves - which must be appropriate for the task and designed to withstand sharps and needles (e.g. cut resistant)
- Sharps box

Note: the sharps box and its contents are considered clinical waste and must be stored safely and securely, and disposed of when appropriate, by a licensed waste disposal contractor.

Emergency action following sharps/needle stick injury

If a needlestick injury occurs:

- Stop work and immediately attend to the injury
- Do not suck the wound
- Encourage the injury to bleed
- Wash well under cold running water
- Pat dry and cover with a waterproof dressing
- Report the incident to your line manager
- Seek medical advice, at the Accident & Emergency Department of the Manor Hospital (01922 721172), or nearest A&E if the injury occurs during an offsite visit
- Ensure that you inform the hospital of the nature of the injury, and any history you are aware of, as soon as you arrive
**Other sharps injury:**
Where persons receive cuts/scratches from rusty nails, etc, especially those discarded in soil, there is an infection risk of tetanus. They should be advised to take the following action:

- Stop work and immediately attend to the injury
- Do not suck the wound
- Do not remove any foreign body, get first aid treatment for small foreign bodies or attend accident and emergency immediately
- If there is no foreign body present, wash well under cold running water
- Pat dry and cover with a waterproof dressing
- Report the incident to the line manager
- Check immunisation records for tetanus immunity

All other cuts and scratches, especially those received outside (e.g. from thorns whilst gardening), should also be cleaned thoroughly and covered with a waterproof dressing to help prevent infection.

**Post incident counselling:**
If an employee receives a needlestick injury, or are anxious as a result of handling sharps, they may need reassurance. Your occupational health advisors can help, or council employees can use the council’s confidential counselling service, PPC - 08000 282850.

**Further information**
Further information on sharps and needlesticks is also available on HSE’s website: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/index.htm)

If you require further information please contact one of the Health & Safety Team

- 01922 655793
- safetyandfire@walsall.gov.uk

Signed: [Signature]

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Document control number: CPS112-01

Jul 2012 (v1)