

## **NEEDLE STICK INJURIES**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Needle stick injuries are skin punctures caused by hypodermic needles. Accidental needle stick injury is a well-known risk arising from the careless or malicious disposal of needles.

### **2.0 RISK**

The main risks of infection following needle stick injuries are from Hepatitis B and C, and Human Immunodeficiency (HIV) viruses. The Hepatitis viruses are more infectious than HIV but both can kill.

The actual risk of infection depends upon:

- Whether the needle was used by a person infected with either Hepatitis or HIV viruses;
- How much material enters the bloodstream - a needle attached to a syringe containing blood is likely to present a higher risk than a detached needle;
- How long since the needle was discarded - both HIV and Hepatitis B viruses can survive for weeks or months particularly if not dried out.
- In the case of Hepatitis B, whether or not the injured person is immune.

### **3.0 STATEMENT OF POLICY**

Poole Housing Partnership Limited considers that employees or client employees on properties under management who may become engaged in the recovery of discarded sharps are at a significant risk. The contents of this Guidance Note seek to minimise this risk.

### **4.0 LEGAL DUTIES**

Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on Poole Housing Partnership Limited to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees. Section 3 of the Act requires that Poole Housing Partnership Limited conduct its activities in a manner that, so far as practicable, prevents people not in its employment from being exposed to risks to their health and safety.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations may apply if a person suffers from an infection after sustaining a needle stick injury.

## 5.0 REPORTING POLICY

Protection of staff, residents and members of staff and the public is of paramount importance. It is, therefore, important that Poole Housing Partnership Limited reacts to the discovery of sharps, on land or in premises over which it has control, as quickly and effectively as possible. Failure to do so may render Poole Housing Partnership Limited liable to criminal prosecution or to civil proceedings. The following reporting system must therefore be followed.

Any person receiving a report of discarded syringes and/or needles (“Sharps”) should record or communicate the following information:

- The location of the “Sharps”
- The date and time the report was received
- The name, address and contact telephone number of the informant.

***It is recognised that it may not always be possible to obtain the informants personal details.***

Immediately following receipt of a report, the information obtained should be passed to the Caretaker.

Caretakers will recover sharps that are reported in high risk areas where there is a significant likelihood of staff, residents or members of the public/children being put at risk, as soon as possible. Examples of areas where such risk may exist, are sharps present on the entrance / exits to Poole Housing Partnership Limited’s managed properties, in garden areas accessible to the public, in underground car parks, in any unsecured outbuildings where users may gain access

## 6.0 SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK - REMOVAL OF SHARPS

The following “safe system of work” is to be adopted;

- No staff will actively participate in the removal of sharps without first having been adequately trained to do so.
- A record of all staff trained to remove sharps will be maintained by the Property Manager and will be updated as necessary.
- Suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and a sharps container will be provided to any employee engaged in the removal of sharps.

The following equipment should be used when dealing with sharps;

- Sharps box.
- Tongs.
- Sufficient PPE for the appropriate employee.
- Searching “Stick” - (metal pole to prod area).
- Mirror, ideally on a pole - (to search inaccessible areas).

Once the area has been examined visually and any obvious syringes and needles retrieved, using the PPE provided, sharps will be immediately placed in the sharps box.

After an initial search has been made, a more thorough search must be conducted. A mirror must be used to view areas that may not otherwise be visible. Where vegetation is present. The search stick must be used to part vegetation or other discarded waste material which could hide the sharps.

The search area should be extended to a radius of approximately three metres from the point of recovery of any sharp.

Staff should not use hands (even with gloves on) to search any area, including such areas as down the back of discarded chairs and settees. Where possible, employees should use the mirror to look in such areas.

The location of any sharps collected should be recorded.

Once a search is completed the searcher will ensure the maintenance of their personal hygiene e.g. hand washing.

The sharps box should be secured in a restricted access area until disposal can be arranged.

## **7.0 MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS**

### **7.1 First Aid Treatment**

The first aid treatment for needle stick injuries is as follows:-

- Encourage the puncture wound to bleed e.g. by pinching the skin adjacent to the wound;
- Wash the wound under cold running water, without soap, and cover with a dry dressing;
- Seek professional medical advice as soon as possible. It is Company policy that any person injured as a result of contact with sharps is taken to hospital as quickly as possible (together with the recovered sharp)
- Record the incident and the action taken.

***Note: - A protective injection against Hepatitis B (but not HIV) can be given, but needs to be done within 48 hours.***

Although a needle stick injury is only reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, when an infection results, Poole Housing Partnership's accident reporting procedure must be followed at all times.

Management are to be immediately informed where injury has occurred as a result of contact with sharps

As soon as practicable following a needle stick injury, the employee should be contacted and advised that Poole Housing Partnership can arrange a confidential welfare counselling service.

## **7.2 Protection against Infection**

So far as is possible, all employees who may be required to deal with sharps will be required to be vaccinated against Tetanus, this should be arranged through their own GP.

Medical advice recommends that all staff engaged in the frequent recovery of sharps, should be immunised against Hepatitis B. Arrangements will be made as necessary to ensure employees involved in the frequent removal of sharps have received protection against foreseeable infections derived from needle stick injuries. Records of inoculations/vaccinations of employees will be held and maintained by the Personnel Department. The provision of Hepatitis B vaccinations, will be reviewed in light of experience and scale of the problem, in consultation with Senior Management.

## **8.0 DISPOSAL OF SHARPS**

Sharps collected, will be stored in the sharps boxes and secured in a safe place until disposal can be arranged.

**SHARPS COLLECTION - RECORD SHEET**

<b>Name of Employee Discovering Sharps</b>	<b>Details of Location / Site Where Sharps Found</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Remarks</b>