

APPENDIX D

SHARPS & NEEDLES POLICY

Purpose:

To provide information on the risks of sharps and needles along with the control measures and emergency procedures to be observed.

Hazards:

When could contact with needles or sharps happen?

- Litter Picking
- Bin emptying
- Sweeping
- Rubbish removal (loose or bagged)
- Leaf Collection
- Working in parks or public areas generally

Risks:

The risk of coming into contact with sharps generally is that cuts and abrasions could occur, which, as well as the injury itself, also provides a route of entry for other health problems such as soil borne infections, illnesses or irritation from hazardous materials.

The risk of coming into contact with used hypodermic needles is far greater as the needles may contain blood borne infections such as HIV or Hepatitis. The infection can remain active long after use, with Hepatitis surviving outside the body for well over two weeks, so risks are still present.

Controls:**Avoid contact**

Eliminate contact with any area or material that may contain sharps or needles. There are a number of effective methods that can be employed to do this.

- Never place hands where you cannot fully see what they may come into contact with. (For example handling leaf debris directly could lead to contact with needles. Always make full use of litter pickers, rakes, hoes or spades and shovels to move materials.
- Never tread down waste materials in skips or vehicles as you may come into contact with sharp objects or needles within the waste material that cannot be seen.
- Never push down waste materials with your hands into bins or on vehicles as you may come into contact with sharp objects or needles within the waste material that cannot be seen.
- Never kneel down in areas where there may be a risk of needles or sharps being present, including grassed areas, shrub beds and wooded areas.
- Carry litter or rubbish bags away from the body so accidental contact does not result in injury.
- Never handle the body of a litter sack, as you cannot see what is inside the bag.
- If you discover needles on a site that indicates the area may be used as a drug taking area, cease work and report this to your Supervisor for further investigation/ assessment.

Reduce the risk

- If you discover glass or other sharps that require disposal, always place them in a rigid container and separate from bagged waste.
- If the local authority operates a needle collection team then make use of this service and have the local authority deal with any needles you find.
- If you discover a hypodermic needle, never pick it up with your hands, always use a litter picker or suitable sharps tongs. Always place a needle in a purpose built sharps box, marked as containing 'Biohazard' material.
- If you see a used needle, never leave it unattended as it could hurt a colleague or someone else, contact your Supervisor and ensure it is properly collected and dealt with.

Emergency Procedures:

- If you receive a cut from sharp items in general, clean the wound thoroughly and cover with a waterproof plaster to keep the cut clean.
- If you receive a puncture wound or cut from a hypodermic needle, you must seek medical advice immediately via the nearest NHS walk in centre, minor injuries unit or your local GP.
- Do not suck any wound that you may receive from sharps or needles as this could lead to possible ingestion of contaminated material and lead to a greater risk of infection.
- Encourage the wound to bleed by squeezing the surrounding area and rinse the wound thoroughly with clean water and soap.