

Sharps and syringes

Procedure for public buildings and outdoor spaces under Council control.

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1.0 Statement of purpose/objectives

This procedure will assist Shropshire Council in caring for staff and complying with the law.

2.0 Scope

This procedure applies to all Shropshire Council employees including part time, temporary staff and volunteers, who deal with sharps (i.e. needles, scalpels, other items that can cut, prick or cause injury) and syringes that have been inappropriately left within or around our premises and outdoor spaces under Council control.

3.0 Assessment of sharps and syringe exposure

Shropshire Council has a duty to ensure that an assessment of the risk from sharps and syringes to the health and safety of employees is undertaken by a competent person. This assessment should enable managers to decide how to control the risks associated with sharps and syringes. It should be reviewed when it is no longer valid, and a record of the risk assessment should be kept.

4.0 Control of sharps and associated items such as syringes

The risk from exposure to these items will be reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable.

5.0 Information, instruction and training

The Council will provide adequate information, instruction and training to employees about their likely sharps and syringes exposure, the risk to their health and what is to be done to control risks.

6.0 Implementation

Management guidance in the form of Frequently Asked Questions is provided.

7.0 Review of procedure

A periodic review will be conducted by the Occupational Health and Safety Team, in consultation with unions.

Approving Body

Health, Safety & Welfare Group – Nov 2024

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Frequently Asked Questions

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1 Roles and responsibilities/who does what?

The Organisation - Specific Responsibilities document sets out the roles and responsibilities with respect to health and safety for all levels of staff within the Council. This document forms part of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and can be found here: [Health and safety policy](#)

2 Should a written risk assessment for control of sharps and syringes be carried out?

If there is a foreseeable risk of sharps and syringes being inappropriately left within or around our premises, or in our outdoor spaces, then a risk assessment must be written. It can be recorded as part of the general premises risk assessment. The assessment should specify who is authorised to remove such items and how this should be done, including the equipment and PPE to be used and the training to be given. Under no circumstances should staff attempt to remove such items without the training, equipment and PPE to do so safely. As with all risk assessments, staff must read through it and sign to say they have read and understood the controls to be followed.

For small quantities of sharps and syringes it is appropriate, for willing staff, who are trained, to remove the contaminated items using the correct equipment and PPE (as specified below in Q3 to Q7).

For large quantities of contaminated items, the manager must decide whether it is safer to contract a company to remove the items. Companies such as Busy Bee Cleaning on 01952 255222 or Vortex 01952 769073 can provide this service. The Occupational Health and Safety team can be consulted for advice in this instance if managers are unsure: health.safety@shropshire.gov.uk or 01743 252819.

For any quantity of sharps, syringes and other drugs paraphernalia the area concerned should be sealed off or warning signs put up until the items can be cleared.

3 What training is available?

A training course is available on Leap into Learning – “Sharps awareness in the workplace”. Staff who may be involved in clearing away sharps should complete this training.

4 How should I handle sharps?

Sharps (i.e. needles, scalpels, other items that can cut, prick or cause injury) can cause injuries, sometimes known as needle-stick injuries. Used needles and syringes can carry blood-borne viruses that may be passed on to other people. It is important that staff avoid direct contact with sharps and syringes by wearing disposable nitrile gloves and if preferred using a pair of tongs when picking up these items, as shown below:



5 How should I dispose of sharps and syringes?

Do not put used sharps, needles or syringes in:

- a) any type of general rubbish or recycling bin
- b) a container that's no longer needed, such as a drinks can or bottle.

A sharps bin must be used to dispose of needles and syringes. This is a specially designed box with a lid, available in various sizes to suit your requirements, see examples below:



All Premises/Services where there is a foreseeable risk of sharps and syringes being inappropriately left by members of the public should have a sharps bin available. The Council does not have a preferred supplier, but bins can be purchased on-line.

Keep your sharps bin in a safe place so it's not a risk to other people and is out of the sight and reach of children.

6 How do I dispose of the nitrile gloves?

When removing them from your hands, take hold of the cuff and pull off your hand (they will turn inside out, as you pull them off). See below. Place the gloves in the normal waste bin and wash your hands thoroughly.



7 What do I do with the tongs?

It is recommended that tongs, that could be contaminated, are kept in a bucket or similar and clearly labelled, ready for the next use. Keep this near your sharps bin and in a safe place so it's not a risk to other people and is out of the sight and reach of children. This container should not be used for any other purpose.

8 How do I dispose of a full sharps bin?

All bins show a line above which they must not be filled – see example below:



The bin can be used until it is full to the line. Do not close the lid in between uses. Once the bin is full, close the lid firmly and complete the details on the label.

Small bins can often be disposed of via a GP surgery. If this is not possible, or for larger quantities contact Busy Bee Cleaning on 01952 255222 or

Vortex 01952 769073. These companies will make a charge to collect the bin, this will be payable by the Council Service involved.

9 What should I do if I injure myself with a sharp?

If you pierce or puncture your skin with a sharp, follow this first aid advice immediately:

- encourage the wound to bleed, ideally by holding it under running water;
- wash the wound using running water and plenty of soap;
- do not scrub the wound while you're washing it;
- do not suck the wound;
- dry the wound and cover it with a waterproof plaster or dressing.

You should also seek urgent medical advice as you may need treatment to reduce the risk of getting an infection:

- call your GP, NHS 111 or go to the nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department

Further actions required are:

- a) inform your Line Manager straight away and report the incident on ERP;
- b) your Line Manager should review the risk assessment and controls in place.

10 What about sharps and syringes left in public spaces such as pavements, verges, highways not under the Premises or Outdoor Spaces control?

Along with broken glass, offensive graffiti and hazardous waste, syringes and drug related litter should be reported to the street cleaning team via Tel: 0345 678 9006. Lower priority street cleaning needs such as general litter, fly posting, inoffensive graffiti and urination should be reported on FixMyStreet (shropshire.gov.uk).