Policy on the
Safe Use and Disposal of Sharps
and
Exposure to blood and body fluids

Authors:- Catriona Campbell Head of Occupational Health
Ray King Head of Health & Safety

May 2014
## Policy Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Policy:</th>
<th>Policy on the Safe Use and Disposal of Sharps</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Policy:</td>
<td>To ensure the Trust has in place suitable arrangements for the safe use and disposal of sharps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directorate responsible for Policy:</td>
<td>HROD</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Name & Title of Author: | Ray King Head of Health & Safety  
Catriona Campbell Head of Occupational Health  
Colin Clarke Lead Infection Prevention and Control Nurse |
| Does this meet criteria of a Policy? | Yes/No/Not Applicable |
| Trade Union consultation? | Yes/No/Not Applicable |
| Equality Screened by: | Ray King  Head of Health & Safety |
| Date Policy submitted to Policy Scrutiny Committee: | 16 June 2014 |

### Members of Policy Scrutiny Committee in Attendance:
- Vivienne Toal, Head of Employee Engagement & Relations (Chair)
- Anne Brennan, Senior Manager, Medical Directorate
- Anita Carroll, Assistant Director of Acute Services – Functional Support Services
- Claire Graham, Head of Corporate Records
- Nigel McClelland, Risk & Governance Manager
- Claudine McComiskey, Head of Domiciliary Care (for Melanie McClements)
- Stephen McNally, Director of Finance & Procurement
- Fiona Wright, Assistant Director of Nursing Governance

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<th>Policy Approved/Rejected/Amended</th>
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<td>Policy Implementation Plan included?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Any other comments:</td>
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<td>Date presented to SMT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director Responsible</td>
<td>Mr Kieran Donaghy</td>
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<td>SMT Approved/Rejected/Amended</td>
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<td>Date received by Employee Engagement &amp; Relations for database/Intranet/Internet</td>
<td>18 July 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date for further review</td>
<td>2 year default</td>
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## POLICY DOCUMENT – VERSION CONTROL SHEET

| **Title** | Title: Policy on the Safe Use and Disposal of Sharps  
Version: 1.0  
Reference number/document name: |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| **Supersedes** | Supersedes/a  
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| **Originator** | Name of Author: Catriona Campbell/Ray King  
Title: Head of Occupational Health /Head of Health & Safety |
| **Scrutiny Committee & SMT approval** | Referred for approval by:  
Date of Referral:  
Scrutiny Policy Committee Approval (Date)  
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| **Review** | Review Date: June 2016  
Responsibility of (Name): Catriona Campbell/Ray King  
Title: Head of Occupational Health /Head of Health & Safety |
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1.0 **Introduction**  
This policy describes the Southern Health and Social Care Trust’s (hereafter called the Trust) approach to the safe use and disposal of sharps and exposure to blood and body fluids.

2.0 **Purpose and Aim**  
The purpose of this policy is to ensure the Trust complies with its statutory obligations and in particular that all injuries and exposure incidents are reported, to enable investigation and action to reduce a recurrence / future risk and shared learning.

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for the safe use and disposal of sharps to minimise injury and exposure to blood borne viruses to staff, service users, visitors and those carrying out work on behalf of the Trust.

3.0 **Policy Statement**  
The Trust is committed to minimising the risk of sharps injury and blood borne virus exposure to staff, service users, visitors and those carrying out work on behalf of the Trust through the correct handling and disposal of sharps.

4.0 **Scope of Policy**  
This policy applies to all staff in the SHSCT, who handle and dispose of sharps, clinical waste and who are exposed to blood and body fluids.

5.0 **Definition of a Medical Sharp**  
A medical sharp is defined as “an object or instrument which is used for carrying out activities specific to healthcare and which is able to cause injury by means of cutting or piercing the skin”\(^1\)

6.0 **Definition of a Sharps Injury**  
A sharps injury can be defined as an injury from a medical sharp that has been contaminated with blood or other body fluid and penetrates the skin e.g. injuries from needles, instruments including razors, bone fragments and human bites.

7.0 **Definition of Blood and Body Fluid Exposure**  
Contamination of the eyes, mouth, skin cuts or abrasions by splashes or spills of body fluids will be managed in line with the body fluid exposure policy.

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\(^1\) Health & Safety (Sharp Instrument in Healthcare) Regulations (NI) 2013
8.0 Definition of a human bite
A human bite that breaks the skin must carry out immediate first aid as per sharps injury

9.0 Legal Context
Under the Health & Safety (Sharp Instrument in Healthcare) Regulations (NI) 2013 the Trust is required to carry out a risk assessment to assess the potential for exposure to sharps and blood and body fluids.

10.0 Responsibilities
- The Trust Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are effective arrangements and adequate resources provided for sharps management within The Trust.
- The Chief Executive is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- The Chief Executive has appointed the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development with responsibility for establishing and monitoring the implementation of this policy. They will be assisted by the Head of Health & Safety and Head of Occupational Health and the Lead Infection Prevention and Control Nurse and specialist Estates officer Environment.
- Infection Prevention and Control will provide education and advice to staff on best practice.
- Occupational Health will care for the injured individual and provide education and advice to staff on best practice.
- Specialist Estates Officer (Environment) will provide education and advice to staff on waste disposal and related procedures.
- Health & Safety will provide advice on the risk assessment process.
- Directors are responsible for ensuring the completion, implementation and monitoring of the risk assessment within their area of responsibility.
- Managers are responsible for:
  - The safe use and disposal of sharps and management of exposure to blood and body fluids.
  - Ensuring that staff are adequately trained in the safe handling and disposal of sharps and management of exposure to blood and body fluids.
  - Ensuring that suitable sharps containers are taken to or are available at the point of use.
  - Ensuring that exposure to blood borne viruses are included as part of the health & safety risk assessment.
Ensuring that staff are made aware of the action to take should a sharps injury occur including the appropriate reporting of the incident via Datix.

Undertaking an immediate risk assessment if a member of staff reports a sharps injury to them.

Taking immediate steps to care appropriately for the injured individual in line with the Care Pathway for the Management of Blood and Body Fluid Exposure.

Investigating the cause and circumstances of the sharps incidents.

Considering counselling and medical treatment for the injured staff member.

**Staff must:**
- Read this policy and comply with safe systems of work and inform their manager where the current system of work is unsuitable or hazardous.
- Follow the Occupational Health guidelines in the case of a sharps injury.
- Inform their Line Manager and complete an incident form via Datix as soon as possible following an incident.
- Use and dispose of sharps in a safe manner and observe safe working practices.

**11.0 Safe Sharps Practice**
The use of sharps should be avoided where possible. Where their use is essential, particular care is required in handling and during disposal. If possible, use safer sharps devices; they are designed to minimize the risk of operator injury during needle use as well as so-called ‘downstream’ injuries that occur after disposal often involving the support services and portering staff responsible for the collection of sharps boxes.

**12.0 Training**
Training is a key element in medical devices safety. It is the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that all staff who use and handle sharps have been trained in the safe use, handling and disposal of sharps.

All staff have a responsibility to undertake the required training at 2 yearly intervals to ensure that they can safely carry out their role.

**13.0 Legislative Compliance, Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance**
The Trust shall seek to comply with the following associated policies, procedures and legislation:
- Health and Safety at Work Policy
- COSHH Procedure
- PUWER Procedure
- RIDDOR Regulations
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000
- COSHH Regulations (NI) 2005
- Health & Safety (Sharp Instrument in Healthcare) Regulations (NI) 2013
- Guidelines regarding the Prevention of Transmission of Blood-borne Viruses
14.0 **Equality and Human Rights Considerations**
This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that the greatest resources can be devoted to these.

Using the Equality Commission’s screening criteria; no significant equality implications have been identified. The policy will therefore not be subject to an equality impact assessment.

Similarly, this policy has been considered under the terms of the Human Rights Act 1998, and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained in the Act.

15.0 **Alternative Format**
This document can be made available on request in alternative formats, e.g. plain English, Braille, disc, audiocassette and in other languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

16.0 **Copyright**
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17.0 **Source of Advice and Further Information.**
Line Managers should be contacted in the first instance, in relation to any specific queries on Policy content. Line Managers should then escalate queries which they are unable to address to:

Colin Clarke, Lead Infection Control Nurse – 028 3861 3868
Catriona Campbell, Head of Occupational Health – 028 3741 2473
Ray King, Head of Health & Safety – 028 3741 2644
Peter Douglas, Specialist Estates Officer Environment – 028 3861 2947