

SHARPS POLICY & PROCEDURE

1 Scope of Policy

The College recognises that hazards presented by hypodermic needles and syringes are no longer just a consideration for people in the medical profession. Unfortunately, housekeeping, grounds keeping and other facilities' staff may be put at risk through exposure to contaminated sharps where these are left lying around or hidden in unexpected locations, e.g. down the backs of chairs, behind cupboards, on the top of shelves, secreted in bedding, or left in WCs, etc.

Contact with used syringes or needles may result in ill-health due to blood-borne infection (BBV) or other illness. Puncture wounds from 'sharps' (ie needles and bladed devices such as scalpels, razors etc) may cause wounds and bleeding which can also make the employee susceptible to infections and viruses in the workplace.

To comply with the requirements of Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and other relevant legislation, Newbattle Abbey College will adopt the policies and procedures contained within this document to minimise the risk to staff to a level as low as is reasonably practicable.

To minimise the risk of injury to staff, students and visitors the College will:

- Risk assess all activities where there is significant likelihood of the presence of used sharps or other contaminated materials.
- Provide sharps bins for the safe disposal of needles or vials.
- Operate clear handling procedures for the disposal of drug related waste.
- Ensure that training and information is provided for appropriate staff in relation to the safe disposal of sharps or drug related waste.

2 References

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, as amended
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, as amended (COSHH)

3 Key Legal Requirements

- Adopt an appropriate policy
- Assess the risks posed to staff and others
- Implement appropriate control measures to bring risks identified down to an acceptable level
- Provide staff with information, training and supervision

Needles, Syringes and Sharp Objects Procedure

4 Introduction

Discarded syringes and needles could potentially lead to exposure to pathogens such as HIV or hepatitis viruses through sharps injuries or through skin cuts. A Risk assessment for this activity must be available.

It is possible that, whilst undertaking their duties within Newbattle Abbey College, staff may come across discarded sharps. In such circumstances, it is important for the advice detailed in these procedures to be followed ensure the personal safety of both yourself and others.

5 College Staff

5.1 College staff **should** only carry out remedial clean-up work themselves if they have been provided with appropriate training and equipment and are sure that it can be done safely. If in doubt, an external competent agency should be contracted.

5.2 Where other activities pose a significant risk of exposure to discarded needles, syringes or other contaminated materials, *a written risk assessment should be conducted*.

6 Discarded Sharps – College Buildings

6.1 Residential and public areas, due to their nature, may be open to the uncontrolled disposal of used needles and syringes.

6.2 Maintaining staff safety is of primary concern when dealing with discarded sharps.

6.3 Dangerous items may be present, and staff should remember to be alert to the hazards that they present.

6.4 If a member of staff finds any dangerous items, or suspect their presence in their work area, they should make sure that the area where the item is found/suspected is left as safe as possible and contact their manager, the Estates & Facilities Manager or Housekeeping Manager immediately.

6.5 Designated sharps removal staff will be contacted to safely remove the sharp using the sharps bin and pick-up tool.

6.6 Any staff member finding a needle should **NOT**:

Hide it.

Attempt to separate the needle from the syringe.
Attempt to put the cap back on the needle.
Play with the needle or syringe.
Put the needle or syringe in a dustbin, down the drain, down the WC or in a litter bin. Ignore it
BUT SHOULD report it.

6.7 The sharps box is bright yellow in colour and is clearly marked as a sharps box.

6.8 Sharps boxes should conform to the relevant British Standard.

6.9 The sharps kit should be stored in the college main reception office (in an area secure from the public).

6.10 When sharps are found in College buildings, the whole kit should be transported to the site by a designated trained member of staff and, using the uplift tool and gloves, sharps should be carefully put inside the container. The sharps box should then be transported back to the College main reception office.

6.11 When the sharps box approaches half-full the Estates & Facilities Manager should be alerted to arrange for uplift and safe disposal.

7 Discarded Sharps –College Grounds

7.1 Sharps and other potentially contaminated materials may be found by grounds staff and other staff members in the College Grounds and Lord Ancrum's Wood. Due to the public access nature of these areas Midlothian Waste Management will collect sharps and other potentially contaminated materials from these areas.

7.2 As with sharps in College buildings; if a member of staff finds any sharps or other potentially contaminated materials on the College Grounds, or co-managed woodland areas, they should make sure that the area where the item is found is left as safe as possible and contact the Estates & Facilities Manager or Housekeeping Supervisor immediately who will contact Midlothian Waste Management.

7.3 The area around the sharp or potentially contaminated item should be cordoned off until collection to help prevent staff, students or members of the public from coming into contact with the item.

**Contact details for Midlothian Council Waste Services as at are as follows:
Waste Services Manager): (0131) 5615300.**

- 7.4 Any staff member finding a needle should follow guidance as outlined above

8 Taking Appropriate Care to Help Prevent Needle-stick Injuries

8.1 Rubbish bags used to line large communal plastic waste bins in public and residential areas (eg residence kitchens) should be carefully tied at the top and the whole bin carried and tipped into the appropriate wheeled bin.

8.2 Rubbish bags that have been filled by residents or members of the public should not be pressed down but should be carefully tied at the top and lifted from the tied top, NOT lifted from underneath, and carried away from the body.

8.3 When cleaning residential accommodation (ie B&B accommodation, student rooms) tools should be used to feel behind furniture and other fixtures where it is difficult to see what might be behind the item (e.g. radiators, wardrobes).

8.4 Cleaning activities should be carried out wearing appropriate gloves. Although gloves are unlikely to prevent needle-stick injuries from occurring should the wearer come into contact with an unsheathed needle, wearing gloves does limit the amount of potentially contaminated blood still on the needle when it penetrates the skin. In tests gloves have been shown to remove up to 80% of wet blood from the surface of a needle as the needle passes through it in a needlestick type incident.

9 Sharps Injuries – what to do if you are get a needle-stick injury

9.1 A sharps injury is an incident, which causes a needle, blade (such as scalpel) or other medical instruments to penetrate the skin. This is sometimes called a percutaneous injury.

9.2 Encourage the wound to bleed (this helps to cleanse it) but do not suck the wound. Be mindful of the issues with regard to haemophiliacs and other bleeding disorders

9.3 If possible, the area should be washed with plenty soap and running water but should not be scrubbed.

9.4 If the mouth or eyes are involved, they should be washed thoroughly with water.

9.5 Any staff member getting a needle-stick injury should report to the Accident and Emergency Department at the nearest hospital, or their own GP, on the same day as the injury occurred.

9.6 Managers should be informed of the incident, and it should be recorded using the **standard College accident report form**, located in the reception.

The accident report form should include details of the needle's user if this is known.

10 Sharps Pick-up Management

10.1 Designated staff members should have been provided with training on the use of sharps pick-up tools.

10.2 Hardwearing gloves and a pickup tool should be deployed to minimise the risk of staff members being exposed to contaminated needles or other potentially contaminated material.

10.3 Always avoid making direct hand contact with the object.

10.4 Needles should **NEVER** be re-sheathed and must **NEVER** be placed in plastic bag. Sharps must not be left lying around.

10.5 The plastic sharps container must be assembled correctly prior to use and staff should ensure the lid is secure.

10.6 The person assembling the sharps container must complete the relevant sections on the label before putting it into use.

10.7 On no account should a sharps container be left in a position that is readily accessible to members of the public.

10.8 When not in use the temporary lid closure must be utilised to prevent accidental contact with the contents, e.g. as a result of the container being knocked over.

10.9 Whenever possible the discarded needle should be picked up by the syringe body and placed in the sharps container with the needle facing downwards.

10.10 If the needle is detached from the syringe body, use the pick-up tool around the collar to ensure the sharp point of the needle is facing downwards towards the container.

10.11 When placing used sharps into the container, ensure that all contents actually pass the plastic flap and enter the container. Items should not be retrieved from sharps bins.

10.12 Unsheathed sharps should **NEVER** be passed to another member of staff but should be picked up with the appropriate tool and deposited directly into a sharps bin. Where possible, dispose of the syringe and needle as a complete unit into the sharps container.

10.13 The sharps container must be discarded when it is two-thirds full. Broken containers should be reported to the Estates & Facilities Manager.

10.14 Sharps boxes should be sealed using the lid provided before it becomes unsafe to put more sharps in. You must not press down sharps in the container to make more room and on no account attempt to remove sharps from the box.

10.15 Prior to disposal of the sharps container, staff must ensure the lid is locked (using the permanent lid closure) and relevant details completed on the label (e.g. date locked etc.).

10.16 A filled to the 2/3rds point – this is usually indicated on the unit, the sharps box should be sealed effectively and labelled and then carefully taken to the **Estates & Facilities Manager's office**. Staff carrying waste containers should take suitable precautions.

Further Government advice on handling needles can be found at:

[Sharps injuries - What you need to do \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/sharps/)

Newbattle Abbey College is committed to challenging discrimination, advancing equality and celebrating diversity

This Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant College policies, procedures and guidance documents, whether specifically listed above or subsequently published or amended.

The College reserves the right to update, introduce, or revise policies and procedures from time to time.

Compliance with the most current versions of applicable policies and procedures, as published, is expected.

Title:	Sharps Policy and Procedure
Lead Officer:	Estates and Facilities Manager
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