



## Sharps Policy

St Peter's College recognises its duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees. A duty to safeguard those not in their employment but affected by their undertaking. This includes members of the public, contractors, visitors and students.

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others affected by their acts or omissions and to co-operate with the employer and others to enable them to fulfil their legal obligations.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002

The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

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

- The College should take the view that all needles found could be potentially infected, therefore the risk will need to be managed.
- The introduction of 'sharp-resistant containers' (e.g. wheelie bins) to replace plastic sacks on domestic rounds can reduce sharps injuries to waste collectors
- The College must ensure that employees and line management understand the risks through proper:
  - Information/instruction;
  - Training; and
  - Supervision
- The College must understand;
  - The risks involved;
  - What to do if they find needles ; and
  - The reporting procedures
- The College must provide appropriate equipment for handling and disposal of sharps, e.g:
  - Tools for picking up needles e.g. pincer tools/tongs/litter picker/tweezers/dustpan and hand brush;
  - Sharps boxes (capable of safely containing needles), and
  - Gloves.

- Suitable gloves should always be used when using tools to move needles. Gloves should be selected to give a high degree of puncture resistance. Remember that gloves should not be relied upon to give adequate protection on their own, but used as secondary protection in the case of accidental contact/puncture wounds.
- Arms are vulnerable when throwing bags into collection vehicles, and needles in black bags (being carried) banging against legs can cause injuries.
- Provide adequate first-aid equipment, including clean water and/or sterile wipes for cleaning wounds, and supply of sterile, waterproof, adhesive dressings.

## Background

Waste workers can be exposed to needles in the material they handle during the course of their work. Needles can be found in:

- Black bags/sacks of rubbish (sometimes needles are pushed through tied knots in black bags).
- Bedding, clothing, soft furnishings, car seats, and green waste.
- Public toilets
- Recreation areas (parks, landscaping, children's playgrounds, subways etc)
- Discarded litter/litter bins (inside cigarette packets, sweet packaging, drinks cans)
- Sink U-bends/drains
- Letter box baskets/door locks/floorboards/walls
- Lift shafts/ducting
- End-of-life vehicles; and
- Demolition materials

## Risks

Risks include:

- Blood-borne diseases (e.g. hepatitis and HIV/AIDS)
- Direct exposure can happen through accidental contamination from discarded needles. The actual risk of infection depends on:
  - If the needle user was infected with hepatitis or HIV viruses;
  - How much infected material enters the bloodstream – a needle attached to a syringe - containing blood is likely to be a higher risk than a detached needle;
  - How infected the material is;
  - There may also be a risk of tetanus.

A safe system of work and set of instructions has been created to act as a control measure when dealing with 'Sharps' i.e. needles/syringes and bladed devices such as scalpels and razors. The College will:

- Provide sharps boxes/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 the safe disposal of sharps or drug-related waste.

## A Safe System of Work

In the line of work that College Scouts carry out they should remember that they may find dangerous items and should be alert to the hazards that they present.

Scouts should be alert for obvious needles before handling waste, bedding, clothing and soft furnishings.

If a dangerous item is found or you suspect their presence in your work area, make sure that the area where you found the item is left as safe as possible and contact your Line Manager.

If you find a needle:

- **Do not** hide it
- **Do not** separate the needle from the syringe
- **Do not** put the cap back on the needle
- **Do not** play with the needle or syringe
- **Do not** put it in a dustbin, down the drain, down the WC or in a litter bin
- **Do not ignore it – Report it**

Line Managers will report the incident to the Maintenance Team. A member of the Maintenance staff will then collect one of the provided sharps boxes (stored at various locations in the College) and equip themselves with suitable gloves, a dustpan and brush and/or a pincer tool. They will then proceed to the area where the suspected dangerous item has been found.

All Maintenance staff when dealing with the disposal of a suspected dangerous item will have been trained and will follow the written set of instructions that ensure they will remain safe during the procedure.

Sharps Boxes are stored at the following locations: the Lodge, the Nurses Room, and the Maintenance Department.

For the disposal of needles or any type of injury caused by a suspected dangerous object, the *Information for employees'* instruction sheet should be followed.

Oxford City Council Cleansing Department will collect any containing sharps boxes and replace with a new one. They can be contacted Monday – Friday 8am – 6pm on 01865 252900

Outside of these hours an answerphone message will give the contact number of the 'duty remover'.

A paragraph is now included on the welcome letters going out to all Students and Conference persons that states 'If you use syringes for medical purposes, they must be disposed of in sharps boxes. Please contact the Porter's Lodge if you require this means of disposal.

### Information for disposal of needles

- Always wear suitable gloves – even when using tools to move needles. Gloves should not be relied on to give total protection, but they can help resist punctures in case of accidental contact:
  - Sweep up needles with a dust pan and brush; or
  - Use a pincer tool.
- Do not try to re-sheath needles.
- Place needles in a sharps box – take the sharps box to the needle, not the needle to the sharps box (where possible). Try to put the sharps box on an even surface before opening it to deposit the needle.
- Do not overfill sharps boxes or try to push the contents down. Before disposal, seal boxes and dispose of in accordance with your organisation's instructions.
- Inform your line managers of any needles found as soon as possible.

### Action following a puncture wound from a needle

- Encourage the wound to bleed, do not suck the wound – rinse thoroughly under running water. If water is not available, cleansing wipes provided in first aid kits should be used. Cover the wound with a dry plaster/dressing.
- Formally record the incident including details of the action taken.
- Seek medical advice and treatment immediately – contact the nearest Accident and Emergency department.

### Information for College Scouts

In the line of work that a College Scout carries out you should be aware that you may find dangerous items and should be alert to the hazards that they present.

- **Be alert!** Look for obvious needles before handling:
  - Waste
  - Bedding
  - Clothing
  - Soft Furnishings

### If you find a needle:

- **Do not** hide it
- **Do not** separate the needle from the syringe

- **Do not** put the cap back on the needle
- **Do not** play with the needle or syringe
- **Do not** put it in a dustbin, down the drain, down the WC or in a litter bin
- **Do not ignore it – Report it** - make sure that the area where you found the item is left as safe as possible and contact your **Line Manager**. A member of the **Maintenance Team** will carry out the disposal of the needle.
- **Under no circumstances should you perform the disposal.**

### Action following a puncture wound from a needle

- Encourage the wound to bleed, do not suck the wound – rinse thoroughly under running water. If water is not available, cleansing wipes provided in first aid kits should be used. Cover the wound with a dry plaster/dressing.
- Formally record the incident including details of the action taken.
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