

# Health & Safety Policy

## HSP 18

### Sharps

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Key Document details:

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| <b>Title:</b>       | HSP18 – Sharps   |
| <b>Author(s):</b>   | David Maine  |
| <b>Date:</b>        | May 2019   |
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| <b>Application:</b> | This policy applies equally to all The White Horse Federation (TWHF) employees including agency or casual staff, and to all premises where TWHF is either the 'employer' or is in control of the premises. |

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| <b>Definitions</b>    | For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply;  |   |
|                       | <b>Sharps</b>   | 'Sharps' are needles, blades (such as scalpels) and other medical instruments that are necessary for carrying out healthcare work and could cause an injury by cutting or pricking the skin of personnel during handling. This includes; syringes, needles, broken glass, scalpels, blades, wires, etc. |
|                       | <b>Sharps Injury</b>  | A <b>sharps injury</b> 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.   |
|                       | <b>Safer Sharps</b>   | The term ' <b>safer sharp</b> ' means medical sharps that incorporate features or mechanisms to prevent or minimise the risk of accidental injury; e.g. needles & syringes with shields that slide or pivot to cover the needle after use.  |
| <b>Policy Aims</b>    | This policy details the procedures to be followed when any sharps incident occurs that may expose employees to potentially infectious materials.  |   |
| <b>Policy</b>         | TWHF is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all its employees. It recognises the risks of sharps to employees who are inadvertently exposed to sharps when they are not stored or disposed of properly. TWHF is committed to the prevention of injury by controlling the risks posed by needle sticks and other sharps. |   |
| <b>Risk</b>           | The main risk from a sharps injury is the potential exposure to blood-borne viruses (BBV) such as Hepatitis and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). This can occur where the injury involves a sharp that is contaminated with blood or a bodily fluid from a carrier.  |   |
| <b>Responsibility</b> | This responsibility is discharged primarily at the line management/operational level.   |   |

#### **Roles & Responsibilities**

1. Roles and responsibilities are defined in HSP2 Organisation.  
Any specific actions are detailed in the arrangements section below.

#### **Arrangements**

1. **Provision of Information, Instruction & Training**
- Information provided to staff regarding risks from sharps should include:
- the risks from injuries involving sharps;
  - relevant legal duties on employers and workers;
  - how to prevent sharps injury;
  - information regarding vaccination;
  - any support available to an injured person from their employer
- Training should cover the following points:

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|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the correct use of safer sharps;</li> <li>• safe use and disposal of sharps;</li> <li>• what to do in the event of a sharps injury;</li> <li>• arrangements for health surveillance and other procedures.</li> </ul>   |
| 2. | <p><b>Provision and Use of Safer Sharp Devices</b></p> <p>Where possible, use of sharps at work should be avoided so far as is reasonably practicable.</p> <p>If this is not practical or feasible, when sharps are used at work, safer sharps products should be procured and used where possible.</p> <p>Procedures and instructions should be in place to ensure that needles are not capped or re-sheathed after use at work unless the risk of injury to employees is effectively controlled by use of a suitable safety device.</p>   |
| 3. | <p><b>Disposal of Sharps</b></p> <p>Procedures for the safe disposal of sharps that are not designed for re-use should include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written instructions for employees; and</li> <li>• clearly marked and secure containers (sharps bins manufactured to BS7320:1990).</li> </ul> <p>These should be located close to areas where sharps are used at work.</p> <p>All sharps should be disposed of carefully at the point of use. This means that suitable sharps containers should be portable enough to take to the activity, and designed specifically to allow needles and sharp instruments to be disposed of easily and safely at the point of use.</p> <p>Ideally sharps bins should be designed to prevent overfilling and accidental spillage of contents. They should be easy to close temporarily and permanently and there should be no risk of puncture of the container.</p> <p>Sharps bins should not be left unattended in areas where they are accessible to children and the general public.</p> <p>Sharps bins will ultimately be disposed of via an approved hazardous waste stream through the use of a licenced and registered waste contractor.</p> |
| 4. | <p><b>Sharps Injury</b></p> <p>Where employees have been involved in a sharps incident, they should inform their manager immediately and report the incident utilising TWHF accident reporting system.</p> <p>If exposure to a blood-borne virus (BBV) or other serious infection is suspected or has been confirmed through a sharps incident, the manager must ensure that the employee has immediate access to post exposure medical treatment. That is, injuries involving sharps which have been contaminated with human body fluids or material that is believed to be infective, the injured person should immediately be referred to the nearest Accident &amp; Emergency ideally within the first hour of exposure.</p>  |

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|    | <p>It may also be necessary in certain cases to provide counselling services for the injured person where applicable.</p> <p>All sharps incidents should be followed up with the appropriate level of investigation, which may in some cases involve the expertise of Occupational Health to prevent reoccurrences and ensure that procedures in place are adequate for control of exposure to human body fluids or material that is believed to be infective.</p>  |
| 5. | <p><b>Inadvertent Exposure to Sharps Risks</b></p> <p>In some job roles, the nature of the work may present unforeseen exposure to sharps risks.</p> <p>Managers should ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is conducted to assess this risk and that suitable controls are put in place to mitigate such risks.</p> <p>As a last line of defence it would be appropriate for managers to ensure that employees are provided with appropriate PPE that are cut and puncture resistant to protect against unwanted needle sticks and other sharps injuries.</p>        |
| 6. | <p><b>Provision of Vaccinations</b></p> <p>Where there is the potential of employees being exposed to blood borne viruses through sharps injury, there is the provision for staff to receive prophylactic vaccinations. This is provided through the Occupational Health department.</p> <p>Job roles being at risk from sharps injuries are identified through jobs skills analysis and reflected in job role descriptions. Managers are responsible for referral of their staff to Occupational Health for vaccinations against blood-borne viruses such as Hepatitis or Tetanus.</p> |
| 7. | <p><b>Limitations of this Policy</b></p> <p>The policy cannot anticipate all eventualities; therefore professional judgement should be used to identify the appropriate course of action needed to protect those who are vulnerable and/or at risk. This judgement should derive from multi-disciplinary team discussion rather than any one individual where possible.</p>   |
| 8. | <p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>I. GRA 18.1 Sharps Risk Assessment Template</p>   |