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## 1.0 POLICY

Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) endeavours to protect staff and campus users so far as is reasonably practicable, from the risks arising from contact with needles, sharps and body fluids arising from the careless or malicious disposal of needles or any other reason. This policy and procedure outlines the prevention measures and the actions necessary in the event of such an injury to ensure the proper management of injuries.

## 2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, students, contractors/service providers and visitors. All needles, sharps and body fluids will be treated as being potentially contaminated and the procedures documented in this document will be followed thoroughly on each occasion.

Campus users who clean, service, maintain, work or study in areas used by the general public and those who work in laboratories may be at risk.

Services and areas where the risk of needle stick injury may arise include the following:

- Toilets
- Rubbish bins/bags
- Electrical panels and switch rooms
- Waste ground
- Lift shafts/stairwells
- Car park areas
- Disused areas
- Fire hydrant/meter chambers
- Sewers/gullies
- Waste management services/recycling area
- Laboratories

The above list is not exhaustive

## 3.0 DEFINITIONS

**Needle stick injury:** A penetrating stab wound from a needle or syringe that may result in exposure to blood or other body fluids

**Sharps:** Includes scissors, razors, lancets, scalpels, broken glassware, or other items stained by blood or other body fluids

**Body Fluid Exposure:** Splashes of blood or other body fluids into the eyes, nose or mouth. Exposure of non-intact skin (e.g. open wounds, cuts, abrasions) to blood or other body fluids

**Blood-borne viruses:** are able to spread in the blood. Several types of hepatitis are caused by blood-borne viruses: Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and also HIV. This means that you can become exposed to these viruses (and the infections they cause) if you come into direct contact with blood that is infected with one of these viruses.

#### **4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **Managers/Supervisors**

- Ensure that the *Safe handling of sharps and needle sticks policy and procedure* is communicated to all staff
- Determine whether any operations within their area of responsibility present a risk of infection arising from exposure to needles/sharps/body fluids, to any of their staff or students
- Ensure that risk assessments are carried out in their areas
- Ensure that all staff and students are aware of the risks and have received instruction in dealing with needles and the procedure for dealing with needle stick injuries
- Ensure that staff or students identified as being “at risk” are provided with sufficient information, instruction and training to carry out their work safely
- Ensure arrangements are in place for the supply and safe disposal of sharps boxes
- Follow the Emergency Procedures below in the event of assisting an injured person
- Ensure that counselling is arranged immediately for anyone who may have received a needle stick injury
- Report all incidents

##### **Health & Safety Office:**

- Provide information and guidance to staff and students on any matter relating to needle-stick/sharp injuries, as and when requested to do so
- Investigate all injuries that occur and if necessary advise on stricter controls to prevent further injuries
- Ensure that all injuries that occur are reported internally as per the Institute’s incident reporting procedure
- Report details of any injuries to the Health and Safety Authority, where necessary

##### **Buildings Maintenance Managers:**

- Identify members of the building maintenance staff that will provide the necessary response when needles/sharps/body fluids are discovered on campus
- Ensure that these staff members and designated persons receive sufficient training to carry out their work safely
- Arrange for adequate supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other equipment required for the safe removal and disposal of sharps/needles/body fluids

**Buildings Maintenance Staff (Porters and General Operatives), designated persons and cleaning contractors:**

- Undertake the training necessary for them to carry out their work safely
- All suitably trained staff are responsible for urgently responding to calls for assistance when needles/sharps/body fluids have been discovered
- Be responsible for dealing with each incident safely by following the training they have received and following the procedures set out in this document

**All Staff, Students and Campus Users**

- Ensure you are aware and understand the *Safe handling of sharps and needle sticks policy and procedure*
- Be responsible for immediate reporting of discovery of any needles/sharps/body fluids to the porter at the front desk/reception area
- Do not attempt to remove the needle/sharp/body fluid unless trained and equipped to do so
- Ensure appropriate personal protective equipment is worn when required
- Where possible use a tool/lifting device to clear rubbish or reach into covered areas where you cannot see, including bins
- If exposed to a needle stick injury, attend a hospital A & E department for urgent medical treatment
- While at work, cover cuts and abrasions with a suitable dressing
- Before taking food, drink or smoking, always wash hands thoroughly
- Report all incidents immediately

**5.0 PROCEDURES**

**5.1 Reporting Procedure for all Campus Users**

Upon discovery or being informed of a needle/sharp/body fluid, a staff member/student should follow this procedure:

1. Do not attempt to touch the object
2. Report the situation to the porter at the front desk/reception area, giving an accurate description of the object and its location
3. Where possible, arrange for the object to be guarded (but not concealed) until a member of the Buildings Office/designated person/cleaning contractor arrives to deal with the situation

**5.2 Removal & Disposal Procedures for Buildings Office Personnel, designated persons, cleaning contractors**

Staff members from the Buildings Office and designated persons should carry out their duties in line with their responsibilities identified in the responsibilities section of this document and training received.

### ***Guidelines for Dealing with Needles/Sharps***

1. Assess the situation and decide what Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)\* and other equipment\*\* will be required.
2. Obtain PPE and equipment.
3. Ensure that cuts or open wounds are adequately covered before starting removal operations
4. Put on PPE and ensure that a sharps container is available
5. Identify the location/presence of the sharp/needle
6. Place the sharps container as close as possible to the sharp/needle and open it
7. Do not hold the sharps container or ask another person to hold it while you are disposing of the object
8. Using tongs/litter picker, pick up the object and place it in the sharps container
9. Keep the sharp end of the needle/sharp facing away from you at all times
10. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RE-CAP ANY NEEDLES. The cap can be disposed of separately
11. Do not break, bend or otherwise try to render the syringe useless
12. Close and seal the container and hold it by the handle when carrying
13. Store the sharps container in a safe place awaiting collection
14. Disinfect area and work equipment (with bleach solution) as required
15. Remove gloves carefully and dispose of as clinical waste
16. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water
17. Notify the Building Maintenance Manager as soon as possible so that he can arrange collection of the sharps container by a specialist waste disposal company

\* PPE may include disposable gloves (latex, nitrile or vinyl), thick-soled footwear and safety goggles.

\*\*Other equipment may include tongs/litter picker, sharps container, and bleach solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).

### ***Guidelines for Dealing with Spillages of Blood/Body Fluid***

- Restrict access to the area until clean-up and disinfection is complete
- Wear disposable gloves to protect your hands. Torn gloves should be replaced immediately
- Use additional personal protective equipment, as needed
- Use disposable towels or mats to soak up most of the spill
- A bio-hazard spill kit may also be used if available
- Clean the affected area thoroughly with an appropriate disinfecting solution, i.e. ten parts water to one part bleach
- After cleaning, promptly disinfect mops and any other cleaning equipment, otherwise you may contaminate other areas
- Put all contaminated towels and waste in a Yellow Bag for disposal as clinical waste

### **5.3 Emergency Procedures for all Campus Users**

#### ***Emergency First-Aid Action in the event of exposure to needle stick/sharps injury & exposure to blood/body fluid***

1. If you are assisting an injured person, put on gloves

2. For punctured or non-intact skin, encourage the wound to bleed by squeezing skin together
3. **Do not suck, scrub or suction the wound**
4. Wash the area well with soap and water
5. Cover wound with a dry sterile dressing
6. Splashes to the nose or mouth should be flushed with water
7. Splashes to the eyes should be irrigated with sterile eye wash (or if none available with tap water). If contact lenses are worn, irrigate the eyes before and after removal of the lenses
8. Contaminated tissues, dressings, gloves etc. should be treated as clinical waste and disposed of appropriately
9. The injured person's supervisor/manager should be notified without delay

#### ***Action by Supervisor/Manager***

1. Transport the injured person immediately to the nearest A&E department.
2. Inform the local Occupational Health Officer of the incident.
3. Complete an Incident Report Form within 24 hours and send to the Health & Safety Office.

#### ***Action by Occupational Health Officer***

1. Report the incident to the reception/front desk so that the sharp/body fluid can be safely removed and disposed
2. Initiate an incident investigation
3. Liaise with the relevant supervisor/manager regarding completion of the Incident Report Form
4. If necessary, report the incident to the Health & Safety Authority

#### ***Action by Contractor cleaners***

Contract cleaners should follow the procedures and training given to them (hyperlink?)

#### **5.4 Post-Incident Support**

- All occurrences will be treated sensitively and the confidentiality of the individual concerned will be assured
- Affected individuals will be given access to appropriate information and counselling
- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available to all staff members
- The Student Counselling service and the medical staff at the DIT Health Centre are available to all students

#### **6.0 IMMUNISATION**

Immunisation may be recommended to individuals who are at increased risk of hepatitis B because of regular exposure to blood or other body fluids. Please see Guideline document for [Hepatitis vaccination for staff and students](#). It is important to note that immunisation does not substitute for good infection control procedures. At present there is no vaccine for hepatitis C or HIV.

## 7.0 TRAINING

DIT will provide education and training opportunities to all staff and students to increase awareness and knowledge of the risks associated with needle-stick injuries and blood-borne infections. This will be facilitated by the Student Health Centres, the Health & Safety Office and Staff Training & Development Office.

## 8.0 REVIEW

This policy and procedure will be reviewed at least on annual basis and its effectiveness will be further reviewed as part of the post-incident process.

Version	Date	Name