

Various research activities at the University (and off-site) involve sharps use, which on occasion lead to needlestick or similar sharps injuries. This Safety Note provides guidance on the minimum operational standard that should be put in place when sharps are used in a research environment.

Needles, blades (such as scalpels), metal wires and other medical/research instruments with a sharp edge or tip needed to carry out specific research or healthcare work and could cause an injury by cutting or pricking the skin are defined as sharps.

Sharps injuries are a known risk in research, health and social care sector¹. Sharps contaminated with biological agents or chemicals can transmit diseases (including blood born viruses² e.g. hepatitis B, C and human immunodeficiency virus) and/or introduce toxic chemicals into the body. Due to the transmission risk, sharps injuries can cause worry and stress to the injured person and can be serious.

Risk assessment based local arrangements must be put in place before the start of work. These arrangements should include:

- A set of local rules and a copy of signed risk assessment including full details of the chemicals/biological agents being used

- Induction, training and authorisation requirements and records

- Emergency contact details and first aid arrangements (including a phone line, transport arrangement and specialist/occupational health contact arrangements in high risk cases)

Near misses and incidents must be reported at the [Health and Safety Services website](#).

Health & Safety Services
October 2018

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References:

1. PHE.2012.Eye of the needle:2012 [ONLINE]Available
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140714091731/http://w>