This guidance is about the safe retrieval of used hypodermic needles and syringes found discarded on KCC or school property by employees. It is designed to provide advice for disposing of these items safely.

A sharps disposal kit should be kept in all KCC establishments and schools.

Reported findings by KCC employees of discarded needles, syringes and other drugs-related equipment are rare, and needle stick injuries are even rarer. Being prepared for the unexpected and knowing how to respond and act makes us more able to prevent ourselves and others from becoming the victim of an accidental injury.

**Aims**

* facilitate the safe removal and disposal of discarded needles and syringes
* reduce the risk of injury.

**Risk assessment process**

It is important to assess the risk of removal of any sharp’s objects found when considering what action is required:

* is it safe for you to attempt removal? You must not take avoidable risks, if you are unsure, discuss what action to take with your line manager or headteacher
* the area where the object is found must be safeguarded to protect others from injury
* if the discovery is made when you are alone, and children/young people or others are nearby, summon help by asking someone to get the sharps disposal kit while you ‘stand guard’
* for KCC establishments including schools, the incident must be recorded on the online HS157 accident/incident form.

**Removal procedure:**

* close and safeguard the area until the sharps disposal kit has been collected
* follow the procedure outlined in the sharps disposal kit
* if the sharps kit is unavailable, **never** place a needle in a bin without first placing it in a hard-protective container to avoid injury
* report the discovery to the local Police Youth Crime Reduction Officer
* if isolated needles or syringes are found, the surrounding area must also be checked **carefully**. In doing so,**do not comb the grass by hand*.***
* neither children nor adults should be permitted to enter an area where syringes or needles have been found repeatedly unless that area has been fully checked before it is used.

**First aid treatment**

Ifan accident occurs where a needle or other sharp object has punctured the skin, the injured person should follow the advice below:

* gently encourage the wound to bleed, ideally holding it under running water
* wash the wound using running water and plenty of soap
* dry the wound and cover it with a waterproof plaster or dressing
* seek medical attention as soon as possible e.g. from their own doctor or a hospital accident and emergency department
* inform their manager
* complete the KCC online HS157 accident/incident and HS160 investigation forms – managers should investigate the circumstances and causes of the incident and take any action required.

An immediate response taken by the injured person can help reduce the risk of infection.

**RIDDOR reporting**

Sharps injuries must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 when:

* an employee is injured by a sharp known to be contaminated with a blood-borne virus (BBV) e.g. hepatitis B or C, or HIV (this is reportable as a dangerous occurrence)
* the employee receives a sharps injury and a BBV acquired by this route seroconverts (this is reportable as a disease)
* the injury causes the employee to be absent from work for over 7 days.

See RIDDOR reporting on the Health and Safety Executive’s website for further guidance.

**Litter picks**

Some schools still conduct litter picks by pupils and students. This may be acceptable within the confines of a supervised building using appropriate protective equipment, but it may not be advisable outside in the play area or grounds where sharp objects may be concealed.