




London Ambulance Service   
NHS Trust

## **Management of Sharps and Inoculation Incidents Policy**

## DOCUMENT PROFILE and CONTROL

**Purpose of the document:** To describe in detail the system to be followed for a single approach to the effective reporting and treatment of the management of sharps and related incidents.

**Sponsor Department:** Infection, Prevention and Control

**Author/Reviewer:** Infection Control Manager. To be reviewed by September 2015.

**Document Status:** Final

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07/09/12	0.4	IG Manager	Document Profile & Control update.
04/09/2012	0.3	Infection Control Manager	Title change to include inoculation incidents. Minor reformatting. Inclusion of procurement of inoculation PPE
30/07/2012	0.2	Governance and Compliance Manager	Reformat
17/04/2012	0.1	Infection Control Manager	New Document

**\*Version Control Note:** All documents in development are indicated by minor versions i.e. 0.1; 0.2 etc. The first version of a document to be approved for release is given major version 1.0. Upon review the first version of a revised document is given the designation 1.1, the second 1.2 etc. until the revised version is approved, whereupon it becomes version 2.0. The system continues in numerical order each time a document is reviewed and approved.

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Equality Analysis completed on	By
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Links to Related documents or references providing additional information		
Ref. No.	Title	Version
	LAS Sharps/Contamination Injury – Guidance for Occupational Health Staff	
TP/027	Infection Control Policy	
	Health & Social Care Act 2008	
	Health & Safety at Work Act 1974	
004 135	Royal College of Nursing – Sharps Safety	
2010/32/EU	EU Framework for Safer Sharps	
	Health & Safety Executive - The Health & Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013.	
HS/020	Hand Hygiene and Care Policy	
	LAS Uniform Policy	
TP/057	Waste Management Policy	
	Joint royal College Ambulance Liaison Committee (JRCALC) Clinical Practice Guidelines(2007)	
	IHCD Paramedic Training Manual	
TP/005	Risk Management Policy	
HS/011	Incident Reporting Procedure	
	Medicines & Medical Devices Regulation - MHRA	

Document Status: This is a controlled record as are the document(s) to which it relates. Whilst all or any part of it may be printed, the electronic version maintained in P&P-File remains the controlled master copy. Any printed copies are neither controlled nor substantive.

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## 1. Introduction

The safe handling of sharps is a critical factor for the successful reduction of Blood Borne Virus (BBV) incidents. Inoculation injuries arising from exposure to contaminated sharps and body fluids represent a recognised route of infection, and subsequent risk to ambulance staff and others. It is therefore imperative that all staff adhere closely to the following precautions and procedures in order to minimise the risks associated with the use of sharps.

The term 'sharps' applies to a wide range of individual ambulance and hospital equipment as well as environmental hazards. However, these may be more broadly classified as, although not exhaustive:

- Needles
- Syringes with an integral needle
- Cannulae
- Drug ampoules / containers
- Razors
- Scalpels / blades
- Single use laryngoscope blades
- Magill forceps
- Spikes from giving sets [which cause a tear risk to clinical waste bags]
- Fractured bone
- Broken glass

All sharps are for single use only, and must be stored at all times in their designated containers and / or storage compartment in the vehicle. Body fluid exposure is also a risk to clinical staff, and therefore staff must be mindful of this when dealing with any potential body fluid splash risk. Staff must ensure that disposable gloves are worn as a minimum when handling sharps and / or have contact with body fluids, and that the utmost of care is taken to avoid glove punctures and subsequent skin or splash injury. All sharps must be disposed of as clinical waste, into designated sharps containers.

All procedures involving the use of sharps must only be practised by staff that have received the relevant training, and as a result are duly authorised to perform the required procedure.

Inoculation injuries are described as:

- When blood or other body fluids comes into contact with non-intact skin (e.g. cuts, scratch, abrasions, sores, chapped skin, etc.), or mucous membranes, including the eyes
- A needlestick injury or a cut with a sharp instrument
- Bites from patients are also classed as inoculation injuries and therefore this policy should be followed in the event of a member of staff being bitten by a patient

## 2. Scope

This policy covers arrangements to ensure effective infection control in respect of the Trust's operations and responsibilities to the safe management of sharps, needle stick and inoculation injuries.

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 places a responsibility upon the Trust to deliver high quality infection prevention and control practice throughout the organisation. The Trust also recognises the regulations laid out by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work 1999.

This policy applies to all relevant personnel employed by or that come into contact with the Trust, including patients, the public, contractors and voluntary staff.

All staff should familiarise themselves with the policy. It is the responsibility of each individual to reduce Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAI's) and the transmission of infection. The Trust recommends that employees apply the principles of this policy as a minimum standard within their practices to ensure that their professional and contractual responsibilities are discharged.

## 3. Objectives

- 3.1 To outline the duties and responsibilities of all staff regarding the safe and effective management of sharps.
- 3.2 To reduce the overall risk of injuries.
- 3.3 To ensure the procurement of equipment that will limit the risk of injury by purchasing safer sharps and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

- 3.4 To ensure a standard reporting procedure for the reporting of needle stick and inoculation injuries.
- 3.5 To give managers an accepted process for the effective management of an inoculation incident including Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP).
- 3.6 How the Trust trains staff, in line with the training needs analysis.
- 3.7 How the Trust monitors compliance with points 3.1 through to 3.6.

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Trust Board**

The London Ambulance Service (LAS) NHS Trust Board is committed to and responsible for the control and prevention of infection. The Trust Board will ensure that appropriate management systems for the use of sharps, needle stick injury and inoculations are in place and that patients, staff and other persons are protected against risks of acquiring healthcare associated infections through the provision of appropriate care, with good clinical practice.

The Trust Board has overall responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of infection control measures. It will monitor sharps use and incidents using the Assurance Framework.

### **4.2 Chief Executive Officer**

The Chief Executive of the Trust has overall statutory responsibility. The Chief Executive delegates this responsibility to a Director for Infection Prevention and Control (DIPC), the Director of Health Promotion and Quality.

### **4.3 Director for Infection Prevention and Control (DIPC)**

It is the responsibility and role of the DIPC to:

- Report directly to the Chief Executive Officer, Senior Management Group (SMG) and the Trust Board to ensure that any changes in legislation or national guidance relating to the management of sharps are made known to the Trust
- Ensure that the Trust provides adequate resources to secure effective prevention and control of healthcare acquired infections
- Ensure that appropriate actions relating to the prevention and control of infection are taken following recommendations from the SMG or Trust Board

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- Ensure that the Trust Board receives regular reports (including key performance indicator reports) with regards to needle stick injury and inoculations
- Be responsible for the Infection Control Team (ICT) within the Trust

#### **4.4 Ambulance Operations Manager (AOM) for Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)**

The AOM for IPC has delegated responsibility from the DIPC to provide infection control advice to all disciplines within the Trust on a day to day basis.

- To produce written reports on compliance with the Health & Social Care Act 2008 for the Care Quality Commission registration requirements and ensure that accurate records are kept of all needle stick injury, inoculations and activities
- To advise line managers within the Trust on the implementation of agreed policies in their areas
- To report to the Trusts Infection Prevention Control Committee (IPCC) and other appropriate committees within the Trusts governance structure (outlined in TP005 Risk Management Policy) as necessary
- To undertake, under the direction from the Head of Operational Support and Assistant Director of Corporate Services research for evidence based practice and clinical effectiveness and the planning of future services and training needs

#### **4.5 Ambulance Operations Managers and all Heads of Department**

All Managers must ensure that safe use of sharps and infection prevention and control is an integral part of their everyday role; as stated in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Their responsibilities should include:

- Ensuring that current legislative and mandatory requirements are met
- Ensuring that the Trusts Management of Sharps and Inoculation Incidents Policy is made available to all staff and that it is maintained with necessary updates
- Compliance with the LAS NHS Trust Management Policy is monitored and where necessary, appropriate action is taken
- Adequate liaison and consultation is maintained with the Safety Representatives and Infection Prevention and Control Champions

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- Information on needle stick and inoculation injury related matters is disseminated to all staff
- All reported incidents, including near misses in relation to infection control are sufficiently investigated with appropriate action taken to prevent reoccurrence

#### **4.6 Occupational Health Department (OHD)**

The role of Occupational Health is assessing the risk following Body Fluid Exposure (BFE), undertaking the management of the BFE, collating data and reporting back to the Trust. Staff who sustain a BFE should contact the local A&E department (usually the same department as the source patient) where a risk assessment will be undertaken. The OHD should be contacted by telephone as soon as possible to arrange follow up management of the BFE

See Appendix 2.

#### **4.7 Health, Safety and Risk**

All incidents of sharp and inoculation injury should be reported to the Health, Safety and Risk department and a LA52 incident report form completed. The Health, Safety and Risk department will:

- Record the incident onto the Datix system
- Follow up any cases where a BBV could be contracted with a root cause analysis
- Provide monthly figures of sharps and inoculation injuries for inclusion in the IPC balance scorecard
- Report incidents of sharps and inoculation injuries to the Infection Prevention and Control Committee
- Report incidents of device failure to the appropriate agencies and to take action where alerts are received in relation to devices used within the Trust

#### **4.8 All Employees**

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 also places duties upon Trust employees with regard to health, safety and welfare. Trust policies also require employees to take responsibility for their own and others safety. Therefore, LAS NHS Trust staff must:

- Understand their responsibilities under this policy and related guidelines, to maintain and increase their knowledge of the subject relative to their role

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- Take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions
- Have due respect for any equipment provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare
- Have available and wear the correct PPE when required and to immediately report any defects in such equipment
- Conform to LAS NHS Trust policies and procedures relating to infection control / incident reporting / investigation
- Report all incidents, including near misses, involving themselves, a patient or any other persons as per the LAS NHS Trust incident reporting procedure

See flow chart in Appendix 1.

## **5. Procurement of Sharps and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

The Trust will ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, to purchase the most appropriate equipment for the task that is required. This is to include, although not a comprehensive list;

- Medical gloves
- Safety cannula
- Self-retracting capillary blood glucose testing needles
- Non-sharp laryngoscope blades
- British Standard (BS) sharp disposal containers
- Carrying / transport packaging i.e. foam filled drugs packs, morphine cases
- Intraosseous (IO) kits
- Eye protection
- Disposable face masks

The Trust will undertake regular monitoring of the purchasing of sharps and PPE to reduce the risk of inoculation injuries.

### **5.1 Storage**

All equipment, when stored, should be kept in a dirt and dust free environment, free from excessive moisture and exposure to extreme temperatures.

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## 6. Duties

### 6.1 Safe Use of Sharps

Is the procedure necessary? Before undertaking any procedure which involves the use of a sharp or involves the outflow of body fluids, ensure that the procedure **is** necessary.

Are the conditions optimum? Only undertake the procedure after the completion of a dynamic risk assessment, and if any of the conditions are not optimum try to change them. If you have to undertake the procedure under less than optimum conditions ensure this is recorded.

Cannulation, intramuscular (IM) injections, subcutaneous injection, IO, capillary blood glucose testing and other procedures involving the use of sharps should only be attempted in the ambulance when it is stationary. The needle should only be removed from its sheath once the puncture site has been prepared, and only then just prior to the intended use of the item. Under no circumstances are needles to be resheathed, including during the disposal stage. Extreme care must be taken when attempting invasive procedures on patients who are restless or aggressive.

### 6.2 Safe Disposal of Sharps

The Trust provides different sizes of sharps containers, both for bracket mounting in an ambulance, and smaller variations for insertion in the Primary Response Pack and Paramedic Packs as appropriate. It is important that staff use the sharps containers approved and supplied by the Trust, and abide by local policies if using the sharps containers of other healthcare providers.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the assembly instructions and locking devices on each of the sharps containers provided by the Trust.

All used needles and sharps must be disposed of immediately after use, and placed directly into a sharps container **by the person who has used the item**. It is vital that sharps are never disposed of into waste bins, plastic bags, blankets, drugs packs etc., or anywhere other than in a recognised sharps container.

The use of safety devices such as a safety cannula does not alter the need to safely dispose of used sharps. The LA52 reporting mechanism should be used for any near miss incidents such as needles incorrectly disposed of.

Where possible, paper or plastic packaging should not be placed into sharps containers, as this reduces their capacity. However, should removal of the packaging present any risk of subsequent injury, then the packaging and the sharps should be disposed of together.

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Needles and syringes must always be disposed of as one unit. Never attempt to re-sheath, or separate a needle from its syringe.

When depositing sharps, care must be taken to prevent the outside of the sharps container from becoming contaminated. If this occurs use standard cleaning precautions to the affected area. A sharps container should always be visibly clean.

The sharps container should be changed when it becomes two thirds full, when the sharps will no longer drop cleanly through the flap or has been in use for two months, this must take place as soon as practicable, after any of these events has occurred. Under no circumstances should items be forced through the flap, and fingers must be kept out of the container at all times.

Staff must never attempt to transfer the contents from one container to another, e.g. from a small to a large sharps box.

The date of assembly and initials of the person should be placed on the sharps container as soon as it is put to use. When ready for disposal the sharps container must be securely sealed, containers should routinely be disposed of on a two monthly basis, even if the two thirds mark has not been reached. When sealing the container; the point of origin, i.e. vehicle fleet number, in addition to the station code and name or signature of the person who sealed the container and disposed of it must all be entered onto the sharps box label.

The openings of sharps boxes must be closed and secured, prior to placing in the clinical waste sharps bin on station. Sharps boxes must never be placed in clinical waste bags.

All sharps boxes will have standard legal and safety markings, these include a bio-hazard symbol, maximum fill line, label containing the start and finish date, CE markings and they all must meet the British Standard (BS 7320:1990).

### **6.3 Sharps / Inoculation Injuries**

All body fluids must be regarded as infectious, so any exposure should be viewed as a potential hazard to Trust staff and its contractors. It is therefore imperative that any inoculation incident that involves contact with body fluids is treated with the utmost care, and with close attention to the procedure in section 7.

Incidents involving risk of blood-borne infection include, although not exhaustive:

- Needle stick or other sharp injury
- Contamination of broken skin with body fluids

- Contamination of broken skin with body fluid soaked clothing or linen
- Body fluid splashes to mucous membranes, e.g. eyes or mouth
- Oral contact with a person's blood, vomit or mucous, e.g. after performing direct mouth-to-mouth resuscitation
- Human bites
- Animal bites (if the animal has had contact with more than one person)
- Environmental objects at the scene of an incident that may be contaminated with body fluids i.e. RTC – broken glass, sharp metal.

If you come into contact with any of these potential risks you must complete a dynamic risk assessment, choose and use the appropriate personal protective equipment.

## 7. Untoward Incidents

The following course of action must be taken if any of the above incidents occur:

- 7.1 **REACT:** Ensure the sharp, if present, is disposed of safely into a sharps container.
- 7.2 Encourage the wound to bleed, but do not suck the wound.
- 7.3 Wash the site immediately with soap and water, or apply alcohol sanitiser for five minutes if unable to access conventional hand washing facilities. However, still wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water at the earliest opportunity, and cover with an impermeable waterproof dressing.
- 7.4 Treat body fluid splashes to the eyes with ample irrigation of water or saline, and those to the mouth with copious amounts of water, do not swallow. Wash the face thoroughly with soap and water.
- 7.5 **REPORT:** Notify the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and arrange immediate attendance at the nearest A&E department. The hospital will require details of how the incident occurred, as well as all information relating to the source patient. In the majority of cases, this process will of course be made easier by the fact that the patient and the staff member will be treated at the same hospital.
- 7.6 **RECORD:** All incidents and near misses must be completed on a LA52 as soon as practicable.

However, the potential exists to sustain sharps or inoculation injuries when either the source of the contamination is not known, or when the patient involved refuses to travel. In these cases, it is still essential that the injured party reports immediately to their nearest A&E department, in order for the degree of risk to be assessed.

It is likely that blood samples will be sought from the injured party, as well as the source if present. Information relating to the injured party's Hepatitis B, and Tetanus immunisation status would also be helpful in this situation, so staff should maintain a current awareness of their vaccination record.

On completion of the risk assessment, the doctor may offer a course of prophylactic treatment. This will be fully discussed with the individual, and may be commenced before all investigations have been completed.

Advise EOC of the situation at the earliest opportunity, who will arrange notification to the relevant line manager, or Duty Station Officer as appropriate. Complete an Accident / Incident Report Form LA52.

**Contact the Occupational Health Department to inform them of the situation, and act on any further advice or guidance as provided.**

## **8. Statutory Law**

8.1 Employers have a general duty under section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure; so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.

8.2 Section 2(2) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 gives a detailed list of things to which the employer must, so far as is reasonably practicable, pay particular attention. Those relating to this policy are;

- Making arrangements for ensuring safety and absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
- The provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure the health and safety at work of the employees
- The provision and maintenance of a working environment for employees that is safe, without risks to health and adequate as regards to facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work

8.3 Employees also have a duty under section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and

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that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. Therefore, employees should use correctly all work items provided by their employer, in accordance with the training provided and the instructions they receive to enable them to use items safely.

- 8.4 Employees duties under section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 also include co-operating with their employer to enable the employer to comply with statutory duties for health and safety.
- 8.5 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require the employer to assess any risk arising from a work activity, taking remedial action as appropriate and to have suitable arrangements for safeguarding the health and safety of employees and others.
- 8.6 The Department of Health is firmly committed to reducing healthcare associated infections. The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (HSC) establishes the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to register, review, investigate and support improvements in the care provided to patients. The act also established a Code of Practice (often referred to as the Hygiene Code). This Code of Practice applies to all health care providers, NHS and private, including hospitals, care homes and transport providers. The Trust is registered with the CQC and is therefore subject to the regulations of the HSC and Code of Practice.
- 8.7 The Health and Safety Executive 'A guide to the reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations 1995' requires the Trust to report any incidents that involve:
1. Acute illness is caused by exposure to a biological agent or its toxins or infected material through a contaminated sharp (**acute** illness that sero-converts from the incident, i.e.:
    - a. Progresses rapidly to a crisis after the onset of symptoms;
    - b. Has severe symptoms
  2. An employee is injured by a sharp **known** to be contaminated with a blood-borne virus

These incidents are reported by the Safety and Risk Department using the appropriate RIDDOR procedures.

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## 9. Management Process of Untoward Incidents

### 9.1 Low Risk Incidents

A low risk incident can be classified as an injury obtained from a sharp that is 'clean' i.e. a needle that has just been unsheathed (including IO), capillary blood glucose testing lancet before patient contact, a glass vial whilst opening.

When a low risk incident has occurred the employee must follow steps 7.1 to 7.4 of this policy, then inform EOC as soon as reasonably practicable with the details of the incident which will be logged and passed to line management and / or station management team as suitable.

On return to station the incident must be reported on a LA52 and processed as per the Incident Reporting Procedure HS/011.

Where equipment failure is the cause of an injury the equipment should be, when possible, retained for further examination and where necessary reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

### 9.2 High Risk Incidents

A high risk incident can be classified as any occurrence where there is known or potential risk of BBV transmission via contact with contaminated sharps or body fluids. On the occurrence of a high risk incident the employee must follow steps 7.1 to 7.5 of this policy.

On return to station the incident must be reported on a LA52 and processed as per the Incident Reporting Procedure HS/011. Any follow up shall be undertaken by the manager that the incident was reported to, or their peer, and follow the guidance for the reporting and monitoring of clinical incidents relating to sharps and inoculations (refer to LAS Sharps / Contamination Injury – Guidance for Occupational Health Staff).

See Appendix 2.

The reporting manger should;

- Ensure that all immediate aid (First Aid) has been carried out. Liaise with A&E staff carrying out the risk assessment and provide input into the risk assessment. A&E may assess that the risk that the source patient could be carrying a BBV necessitates them being tested against Hepatitis B, C and HIV
- Contact the Occupational Health Department as per the details in Appendix 2. The manager should provide the relevant information to the OHD

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- If the material and injury type are considered to be a high risk, medical staff managing the source patient's care should be informed and asked to perform an urgent preliminary assessment of the risk of carriage of BBV. The purpose of this assessment is to identify the management of risk for Hepatitis B and or Hepatitis C and whether PPE for HIV is required. If a distinct risk is identified the employee will be given PEP, treatment and advice in A&E
- The employee should be referred to the OHD, reference to the fact that the referral is the result of a sharps / inoculation injury should be clearly stated on the referral
- Conduct a thorough investigation as to the cause of the incident / injury, and forward a copy of the report to Health, Safety and Risk and Human Resources departments, along with the completed LA52
- Adopt immediate preventative strategies as necessary, e.g. safe disposal of sharps, sharps containers and safe closure of these containers. Please ensure that a list of all actions undertaken is included within the report.

The Trust has a responsibility to ensure that all employees are trained in the sharps / inoculation injury procedures, and the safe disposal of sharps and sharps containers.



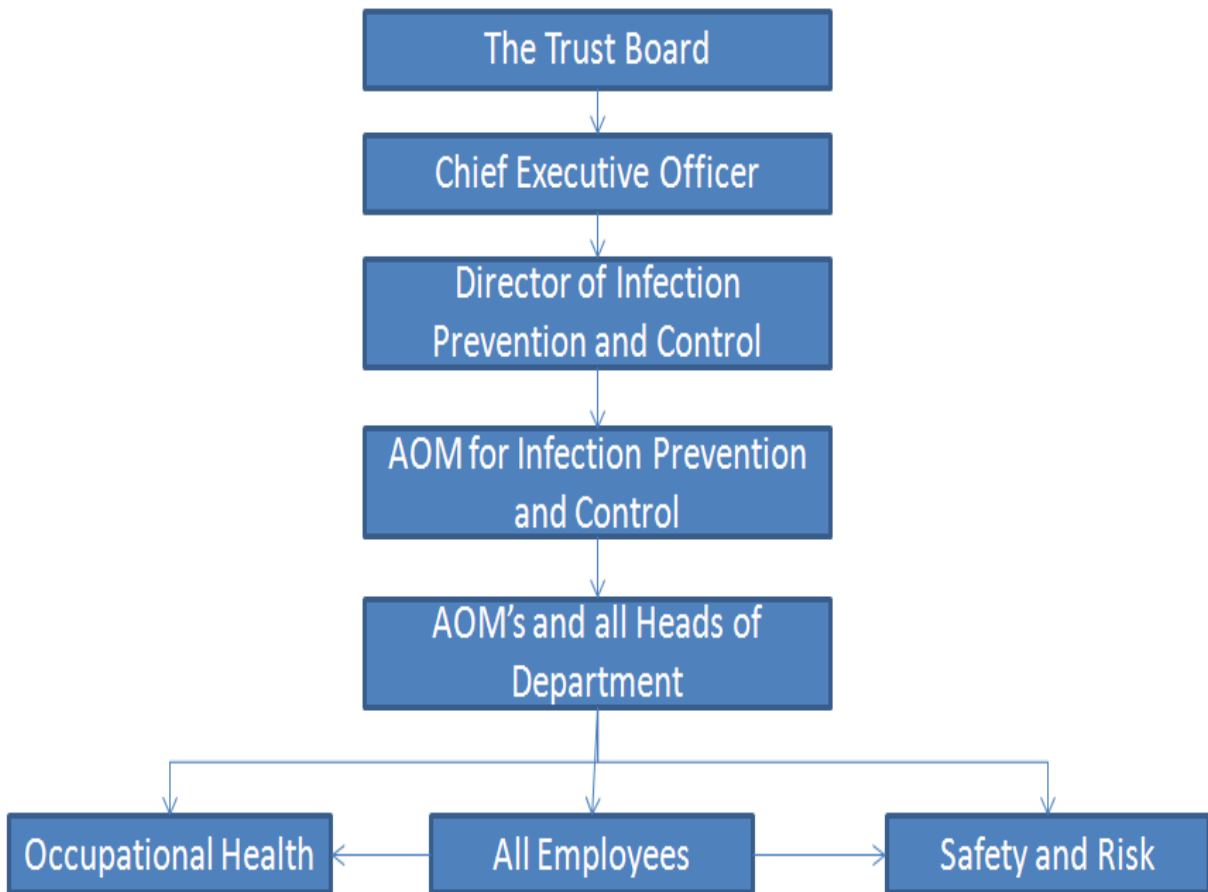
## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

<b>Intended Audience</b>	For all LAS staff
<b>Dissemination</b>	Available to all staff on the Pulse
<b>Communications</b>	Revised Procedure to be announced in the RIB and a link provided to the document
<b>Training</b>	All clinical staff providing healthcare services should be competent in their practice. Training is provided to all appropriate staff, in accordance with the Training Needs Analysis. Competence is tested and recorded before the clinician can undergo practical experience in a controlled environment, where then they can be deemed to be proficient in the management of sharps.

### Monitoring:

Aspect to be monitored	Frequency of monitoring AND Tool used	Individual/ team responsible for carrying out monitoring AND Committee/ group where results are reported	Committee/ group responsible for monitoring outcomes/ recommendations	How learning will take place
Duties including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How inoculation incidents are reported (Paragraph 7)</li> <li>• Process for the management of an inoculation incident (including prophylaxis) (Paragraph 9)</li> </ul>	Annual PDR process	AOM reporting via Area Quality Meetings	Infection Prevention and Control Committee	Learning disseminated via various mechanisms including Medical Directorate Bulletins, Area Quality Meetings, Routine Information Bulletins, etc
	Quarterly review of sharps and inoculation injuries, update via IPC balanced scorecard,  Quarterly review of procurement process by Clinical Equipment Group	Infection Control Manager reports to the Infection Prevention and Control Committee  Safety and Risk Manager reports to the Infection Prevention and Control Committee	Clinical Quality, Safety and Effectiveness Committee	

Responsibilities Flow Chart



# Body Fluid Exposure

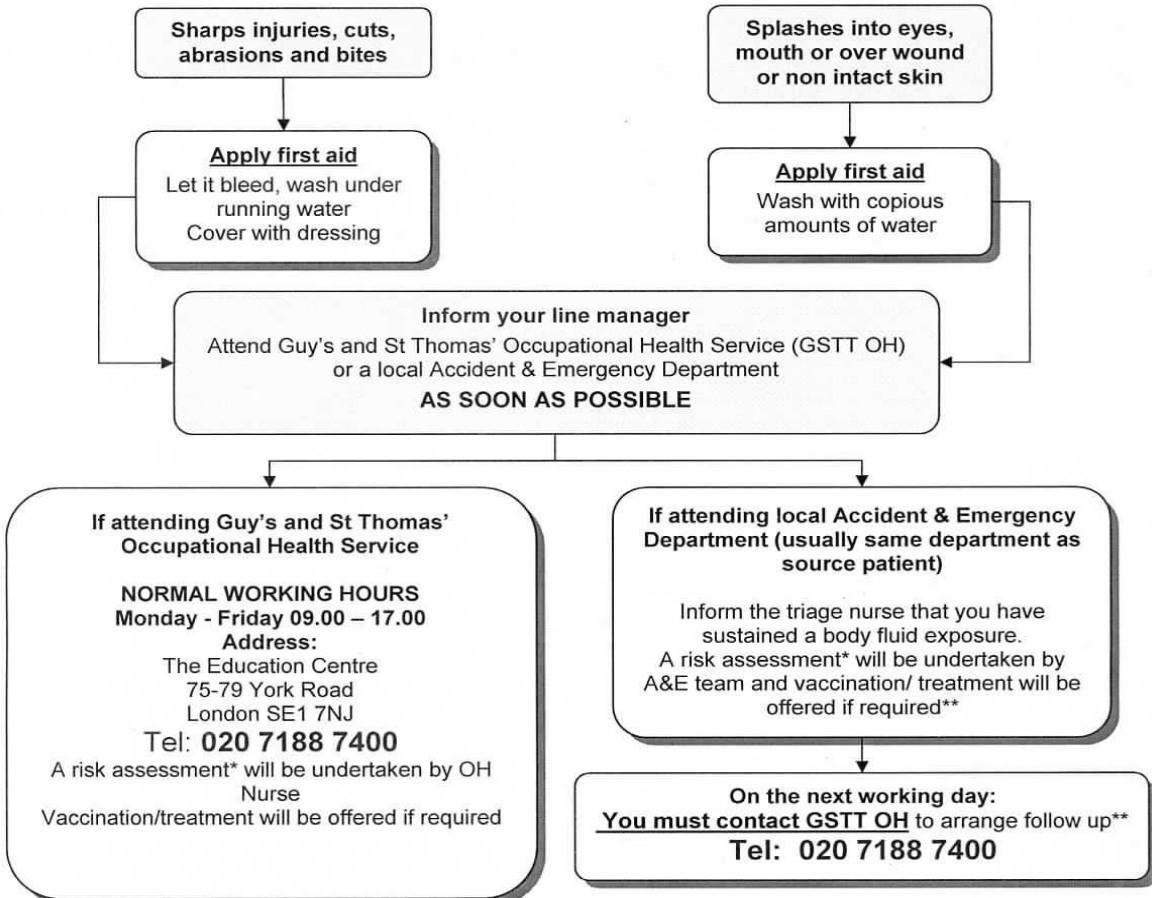


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## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSTAIN A BODY FLUID EXPOSURE



- \*Source patient's details which will assist with the risk assessment (if known):**
- Name, Date of birth
  - Current location
  - Ethnic origin & country of birth
  - Past or present IV drug use
  - History of blood/plasma transfusion
  - Sexual history (i.e. past or present high risk sexual behaviour)
  - Sexual partner at risk of BBV
  - Past or present commercial sex work
  - Any other relevant information

- \*\* Information from A+E that will help Occupational Health to follow you up:**
- Please ask A+E to take a "serum save" blood sample from you
  - If HIV PEP to be started, ask A+E to take blood sample from you for FBC, U&Es, LFTs, amylase, bone profile (calcium and phosphate), blood glucose and lipids
  - If the source person is consented for blood borne virus testing by A+E, please ask if that consent could include the release of the results to GSTT OH
  - Please ask for a copy of the risk assessment and treatment received to be given to you and a copy to be faxed to GSTT OH
- Fax: 020 7188 4146**