

5 June 2013

Dear Colleagues

**HEALTH & SAFETY (SHARPS INSTRUMENTS IN HEALTHCARE) REGULATIONS 2013 - Guidance for employers & employees**

1. The Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 (the 'Sharps Regulations') implement aspects of the European Council Directive 2010/32/EU not specifically addressed in existing GB legislation and applies from 11 May 2013.
2. The Regulations build on existing legislation and require the following risk control measures to be in place:
  - avoid, so far as is reasonably practicable, the use of sharps;
  - when sharps have to be used, safer sharps (see para 3 below) are used where it is reasonably practicable to do so;
  - needles (see below) are not capped/re-sheathed after use unless the risk is effectively controlled by use of a suitable appliance, tool or other equipment; and
  - sharps are safely disposed of (written instructions available and clearly marked/secure containers located close to the point of use).

**From the Chief Medical Officer,  
Chief Nursing Officer and Chief  
Scientific Adviser (health)**

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**HEALTH & SAFETY (SHARPS INSTRUMENTS IN HEALTHCARE) REGULATIONS 2013 – Guidance for employers & employees**

**Electronic distribution to:**

**Health Boards & Trusts:**

Chief Executives  
Medical Directors  
Nurse Directors  
Directors of Therapies and Health Science  
Directors of Public Health  
Directors of Workforce and Organisational Development

Infection Control Doctors

Infection Control Nurses

**Public Health Wales:**

Chief Executive  
Director of Health Protection  
Welsh Healthcare Associated Infections Programme Team

CCDCs

**NWSSP-FS**

**WAST**

**Others:**

WG professional and policy leads  
Healthcare Inspectorate Wales  
Care & Social Services Inspectorate Wales

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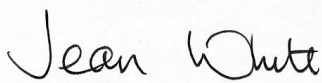
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## Safer sharps

3. Safer sharps incorporate features or mechanisms to prevent or minimise the risk of accidental injury. For example, a range of syringes and needles are now available with a shield/cover that slides/pivots to cover the needle after use. In deciding whether or not to use safer sharps, the following factors should be considered:
  - the device must not compromise patient care;
  - the reliability of the device;
  - the user should be able to maintain appropriate control over the procedure;
  - ease of use;
  - the suitability of the safety mechanism design for the application.
4. Further details on other factors that need to be taken into account in the use of safer sharps are included in the H & SE information sheet available at:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsis7.htm>  
and this also covers associated aspects such as information, training, injury reporting, incident investigation and treatment.
5. The Chief Dental Officer has recently drawn this information to the attention of registered dental practitioners. Please cascade this information to all other colleagues who need to see it.



**Dr Ruth Hussey**  
Chief Medical Officer



**Professor Jean White**  
Chief Nursing Officer



**Dr Owen Crawley**  
Chief Scientific Adviser (health)