



St John Fisher Catholic College



with Humanities Specialist Status 

Policy: Noise in the Workplace (SCC HR51)

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Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Changes	Reasons for Alterations
Issue 1	30 th September 2011	New corporate policy.	

Success Indicators

The following indicators will demonstrate the level of compliance with this policy and its procedures:

- a) Line Managers and Premise Managers identify areas or work activities where initial assessments are required. (See section 5.1)
- b) Where initial assessments indicate that a full assessment is required an assessment has been undertaken and employees informed of the results.
- c) Where workplaces or work activities are identified as at or above the lower exposure action value, action has been taken to reduce noise levels as far as is reasonably practicable using means other than Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).
- d) Where workplaces or work activities are identified as at or above the upper exposure action level Hearing Protection Zones have been designated and action taken to reduce the noise levels.
- e) Where noise is at or above the lower exposure action level suitable PPE is provided and maintained.
- f) Managers are aware of their duties to provide suitable hearing protection where necessary and to enforce the wearing of hearing protection where employees are exposed to noise at or above the upper exposure action level.
- g) Employees are aware of their duties to wear hearing protection, use any noise reducing equipment installed and report any defects in hearing protection equipment or equipment installed to reduce noise.
- h) Suitable information, instruction and training about noise and how to protect their hearing is provided to employees who work in noisy environments
- i) Health surveillance is undertaken for those who are exposed to noise at or above the lower exposure action level at least every three years

1. Application

This policy applies to all County Council workplaces and work activities.

2. Introduction

Noise at work is recognised as a potential health hazard. Evidence shows that excessive noise can cause long term damage to hearing and accelerate the normal loss of hearing which occurs as people grow older.

There is a duty to manage noise at work and this policy outlines the approach to be taken to the assessment of noise and control measures. Design and engineering controls must be used to reduce noise production and exposure to noise so far as reasonably practicable rather than the use personal protective equipment such as hearing protection.

3. Aims & Objectives

The aim of this policy is to ensure that that the council has in place adequate systems to assess and control the risks from noise in the workplace and protect the hearing of employees as required by the Control of Noise at Work Regulations.

4. Definitions

Decibel (dB) - a unit for measurement of sound level. Decibels are measured on a logarithmic and not linear scale.

dB(A) – sound level in decibels measured on an “A” weighted scale. The “A” weighted scale is used to measure environmental noise.

dB(C) - sound measured in decibels on a “C” weighted scale. The “C” weighted scale is normally used to measure peak, impact or explosive noises.

Exposure limit value - the level of daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 87dB(A) or of peak sound pressure of 140dB(C) which must not be exceeded.

Lower exposure action value - the lower of the two levels of daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 80dB(A) or of peak sound pressure 135dB(C) which, if reached or exceeded, require action to be taken to reduce risk.

Upper exposure action value - the higher of the two levels of daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 85dB(A) or of peak sound pressure of 137dB(C), requiring action if reached.

5. Arrangements for Applying The Policy

All managers and premise managers should eliminate noise at source but where this is not possible it must be reduced as far as is reasonably practicable using controls other than Personal Protection Equipment. Appendix 1 provides detail of control measures

5.1. Initial Assessment of Noise.

Where Managers and Premise Managers identify that an activity or workplace requires an initial noise assessment this should be recorded on HSF63. The initial noise assessment will identify if a workplace or work activity requires a full noise assessment.

The initial assessment should consider the following indicators:

- You have to raise your voice to be heard by someone two metres away for at least part of the day.
- There is use of noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour a day.
- The work involves causing impacts such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools etc
- The work involves explosive sources such as cartridge-operated tools or detonators,
- Individuals are surrounded by intrusive noise for **most of the day**.

If the manager identifies that the work environment or work activities involves any of the above points then a full assessment will be required. If a manager identifies that a workplace or work activity may require a full noise assessment they should contact the Strategic Health and Safety Service as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for a full noise assessment to be undertaken.

If the assessment indicates that it is unlikely that the noise for the workplace or work activity will require a full assessment this should be recorded. The assessment should be reviewed if the workplace or activity changes in a manner that might increase the exposure to noise in any way e.g. individuals work closer to noisy equipment, use equipment for longer periods of time or additional equipment is introduced to the workplace.

Line managers or premises managers should inform employees of the findings of the initial assessment.

If the noise produced is not sufficient to require a full assessment it is good practice to ensure that the exposure to noise reduced as far as reasonably practicable. Methods for the reduction of noise levels are described in Appendix 1.

5.2 Full Assessment

Where an initial assessment identifies that a full assessment is necessary the manager, with support the Strategic Health and Safety Service shall arrange for a competent person to undertake a the assessment in a manner that complies with the requirements of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations.

Summary Chart of Levels and Actions

	Noise exposure	Actions required	Employee Action
Lower exposure action level	daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 80dB(A) or peak sound pressure 135dB(C)	Reduce noise so far as is reasonably practicable. Provide hearing protection on request to employees if the noise cannot be reduced below this level.	Co-operate with the introduction of any noise reduction measures.
Upper exposure action level	daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 85dB(A) or peak sound pressure of 137dB(C)	Provide suitable hearing protection as an interim measure or if the noise exposure cannot be reduced below this level. Reduce the noise exposure by means other than hearing protection so far as is reasonably practical. Designate workplaces and activities as hearing protection zones.	Employees MUST wear hearing protection equipment. Report any defects or loss of Hearing Protection Equipment. Co-operate with Health Surveillance.
Exposure limit value	daily or weekly personal noise exposure of	Cease activity/ use of equipment which is source of noise exposure. Reduce noise	

	87dB(A) or peak sound pressure of 140dB(C)	to below the exposure limit value.	
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If the full assessment identifies that the noise in a workplace or from a work activity is at or above the lower exposure action levels the manager, with the support of the Strategic Health and Safety Service and the competent assessor, will identify measures to reduce the levels of exposure to the noise to a as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

If the full assessment identifies that the noise in a workplace or from a work activity is at or above the upper exposure action levels measures to reduced the level of exposure to noise to as low a level as is reasonably practicable, not including the use of PPE, must be taken as quickly as possible. Suitable hearing protection should be introduced as an interim measure. It is desirable that the noise exposure should be reduced below the upper exposure action level. Hearing Protection Zones must be introduced where this not possible.

If the full assessment identifies that the noise in a workplace or from a work activity is at or above the exposure limit value then the activity must be discontinued immediately unless hearing protection is provided that which reduces the noise exposure to below this level.

Employees who are or may be exposed to the noise which has been assessed must be informed of the findings of the full noise assessment.

5.3 Control Measures

Noise in all workplaces and as a result of all work activities should be at a level which is as low as reasonably practicable. Reductions in noise levels may be achieved by varying methods and managers should consider those in Appendix 1.

When an assessment indicates that noise is above any exposure limit, control measures should be introduced to reduce the noise as far as is reasonably practicable and where possible below the lower exposure limit value. Hearing protection should be considered an interim control measure until other control measures to reduce the noise exposure have been identified and implemented. The preferred outcome is to lower the noise exposure to a level where hearing protection is not required. The types of control measures that should be considered are identified in Appendix 1.

After the control measures have been implemented an assessment should be undertaken to identify the effectiveness of the controls and to ensure that adequate reductions in the exposure levels have been achieved.

5.4 Hearing Protection

Hearing protectors are Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and as with all PPE these should be used as a last resort and the risk, i.e. the noise, should be reduced as far as possible by other means.

Where employees are exposed to noise between the upper and lower exposure action levels the council will provide free hearing protectors and instruction and training on their use.

If employees are exposed to noise at or above the upper exposure limit then the council will provide suitable hearing protection, which must be worn. The hearing protection provided must reduce the noise exposure below the upper exposure limit.

5.4.1 Selection of hearing protection

The selection of hearing protection must be given careful consideration. The use of generic "one size fits all" hearing protection is not suitable. The protection must be worn correctly and at the appropriate time for the protectors to be effective and the protectors chosen will affect the willingness of employees to wear the protection.

- The protection chosen must be suitable for the level and frequency of the noise.
- The protection should not reduce the noise levels too much as this can cause a feeling of isolation for the wearer and lead to an unwillingness to wear the protection.
- The protection chosen should be comfortable and suitable for the working environment.
- Consideration must be given to how comfortable and hygienic the protectors will be in the circumstances which they will be used
- If they will be worn with any other protective equipment,
- If the activity of the user can be accommodated.
- The individual who will be wearing the protection should be considered as part of the selection process including the need to wear glasses and facial hair.

Advice regarding the selection of hearing protection is available from the Strategic Health and Safety Service.

5.4.2 Issue & Maintenance of hearing protection equipment

Where hearing protection is provided the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) policy HR110 should be followed and the issue of equipment should be recorded. Regular checks should be made on the condition of hearing protection to ensure that it is in good working order and in a hygienic condition. Items to be considered include:

- it remains in good, clean condition;
- earmuff seals are undamaged;
- the tension of the headbands of earmuffs is not reduced;
- there are no unofficial modifications;
- compressible earplugs are soft, pliable and clean.

Arrangements must be in place to ensure that employees are aware of their responsibilities for the care of PPE issued to them and that they regularly check its condition. Employees should be aware of the system for reporting any defects or damage affecting their PPE. Prompt action should be taken to repair or replace PPE that is reported as being defective or lost

Suitable storage must be provided for PPE when it is not in use to avoid the equipment from being damaged from chemicals, sunlight, high humidity, heat and accidental knocks; contaminated from dirt and harmful substances; and the possibility of losing it.

Managers shall ensure that adequate information, instruction, supervision and training is provided to enable wearers to use PPE correctly. Managers must also be aware of why PPE is being used and how to use it properly.

5.5 Hearing Protection Zones

Following a full assessment by a competent person a Hearing Protection Zone may be identified or where the equipment is mobile the activity may be a Hearing Protection Zone. These are areas or activities where exposure to noise is above the upper action value of 85dB(A) and for which wearing hearing protection is compulsory. If an area is identified in this manner it must be clearly marked "Ear Protection Zone" or if this is not possible those undertaking the work activity must be informed in writing of the procedure. Managers must ensure that the hearing protection provided is worn in Hearing Protection Zones and employees failing to wear hearing protection in these areas subject to disciplinary action.

5.6 Health surveillance

Where an employee is exposed to noise levels at or above the lower exposure action values Occupational Health will ensure that their hearing will be monitored on a regular basis. This will normally be annually for the first two years of employment in the role that exposes them to the noise and then at three-yearly intervals.

Initial Health Screening

Where it is identified that a role involves working in an environment which is above the lower action level, managers must inform the Occupational Health Unit and ensure that arrangements are made for the individual who is employed in the role to have their hearing assessed within two months of taking up employment. Having a baseline for individuals will help effective monitoring of any impact that noise is having on the hearing.

5.7 Information, Training and Instruction

Managers must ensure that employees have suitable and sufficient training regarding noise. Where an employee is exposed to noise above the lower exposure action limit this should include the correct use of the hearing protection which has been selected for them. Information, instruction and training will be considered adequate where it enables the wearer to know:-

- the risk or risks which the personal protective equipment will avoid or limit;
- the purpose for which and the manner in which personal protective equipment is to be used; and
- any action to be taken by the employer and employee to ensure that the personal protective equipment remains in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair as required by these arrangements.

The instruction and training provided to employees should be recorded.

5.8 Purchase and Hire of Equipment

All Managers and Premise Managers should consider the level of noise that may be produced by a piece of equipment before hiring or purchasing equipment. Those responsible for the purchasing of equipment should consider manufacturer's information regarding noise levels from equipment. Noise levels from equipment may vary from that provided by the Manufacturer depending on location and use of the equipment. Equipment of a non commercial nature such as that which may be purchased from DIY stores may produce significantly higher levels of noise than that designed for commercial use. Managers must consider the purchase of this type of equipment carefully.

The data produced by manufacturers regarding noise may be less than that experienced depending on the use and location of equipment and this should be considered before purchase or hire.

Suppliers of hire equipment are required to provide information regarding the noise levels that may be produced by equipment prior to the completion of an agreement. An assessment of the noise produced by the equipment when on site should be undertaken and appropriate action taken. Instructions and guidelines for control measures regarding noise provided by the supplier and/or manufacturer should be noted and normally regarded as minimum precautions.

5.9 Contractors

Contractors who undertake work for and on behalf of the County Council have a duty to comply with the Control of Noise at Work Regulations and to co-operate with other employers who may be affected by their activities.

Premise Managers and Managers must provide information regarding the levels of noise to which they may be exposed to those coming on to their sites, premises or working near noisy activities. This is particularly important if the contractor will be accessing or working in Hearing Protection Zones. Use of equipment or powered tools by contractors in Hearing Protection Zones should be considered carefully as additional noise sources may result in noise exposure above the Exposure Limit Value. A Control of Contractors - Hazard Exchange Form HSF46 should be used to ensure that information is effectively communicated.

6. Key Accountabilities

6.1 Staff with responsibility for supervising work activities

Those with line management responsibility for individuals will:

- Complete initial noise assessments where they have identified workplaces or work activities that may require an initial noise assessment.
- Provide suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training to employees regarding noise and where necessary hearing protection.
- Make available adequate finance for full noise assessments and where identified as necessary, remedial works to reduce noise exposure levels.
- Where hearing protection is required ensure that employees wear the hearing protection and it is monitored and maintained.
- Provide information to those who are not managed by them but may be affected by noise.

6.2 Premise Managers

All Premise Managers across the full range of the County Council's services to whom "Responsible Person" responsibilities have been delegated will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the following requirements are met at the premises under their control.

- Complete initial noise assessments where they have identified workplaces or work activities that may require an initial noise assessment.
- Provide suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training to employees regarding noise and where necessary hearing protection.
- Make available adequate finance for full noise assessments and where identified as necessary, remedial works to reduce noise exposure levels.
- Where hearing protection is required ensure that employees wear the hearing protection and it is monitored and maintained.
- Provide information to those who are not managed by them but may be affected by noise.

6.3 Employees

Every employee of the Council will:

- Co-operate with any noise assessment undertaken.
- Co-operate with the introduction and use of any noise reduction measures.
- Use the Hearing Protection provided as instructed for activities and in locations designated as Hearing Protection Zone and where instructed by their manager.
- Report any loss or defect in Hearing Protection.
- Inform their manager should they identify if they are experiencing any reduction in hearing.

7. Specialist Advice

7.1 Strategic Health & Safety Service

Strategic Health and Safety Service can assist with the interpretation and practical application of this policy. It is recommended that you contact the Strategic Health and Safety Service if further advice, guidance and support are required.

7.2 Occupations Health Service

Will, upon request from managers, arrange for Initial Health Assessments and health surveillance to be undertaken following the identification of individuals who work in environment where they may be exposed to noise above the lower exposure action level.

8. Legislative Framework

- a. The Health and Safety at Work Act
- b. The Control of Noise at Work Regulations

9. Further Advice and Information

This policy document is for general guidance only. If you need any further advice on how to apply this policy please contact the Strategic Health and Safety Service.

Further background information on this topic is available on the following Websites:
www.hse.gov.uk

10. Related Documents

HR110 Personal Protective Equipment

11. Standard Documents

HSF63 Record of Initial Assessment of Noise

Appendix 1

Control measures to be considered to reduce exposure to noise.

Protection is best achieved by controlling noise at source. Follow the sequence of methods to reduce exposure to noise. Wearing hearing protection is the last resort:

- When purchasing machinery or plant, obtain noise data from the supplier to inform the decision. The noise levels should be relevant to where workers will actually be.
- Move noisy machinery/plant into areas where there are no workers, or few workers (e.g. into an outbuilding or dedicated room)
- Where noisy machinery/plant has to remain in the working area, enclose it within a sound-insulating enclosure if possible. Anti-vibration machine mountings may also be required.
- suitable and sufficient information and training for employees, such that work equipment may be used correctly, in order to minimise their exposure to noise;
- Where enclosure is not possible, reduce noise by other engineering means such as:
 - lining guards/panels with noise dampening material
 - providing acoustic screens
 - lining the inside of hoppers with impact-deadening material
 - fitting anti-vibration mountings
 - fitting silencers to exhaust systems
 - ensuring good maintenance to stop rattles and prevent noise from wear.
- Duration of exposure can be reduced by job rotation or providing a noise refuge.
- Where noise levels still exceed 85dB(A) ensure workers wear hearing protection (earplugs or earmuffs) within the designated and clearly marked zones.

Initial Noise Assessment

Area/work activity to be assessed:

Managers and Premise Managers should consider the following indicators:

	Yes	No
Individuals have to raise their voice to be heard by someone two metres away for at least part of the day		
There is use of noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour a day.		
The work involves causing impacts such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools etc.		
The work involves explosive sources such as cartridge-operated tools or detonators.		
Individuals are surrounded by intrusive noise for most of the day.		

If the answer to any of the above is "YES" it may be necessary to undertake a full noise assessment and you should contact the [Strategic Health and Safety Service](#) as soon as possible for advice. Tel 01785 355777

Name of Manager undertaking assessment:
Position of Manager:
Signature of assessor:
Date of assessment: