

CORPORATE PROCEDURE

NOISE AT WORK

1 Aims of the procedure

The aims of this Corporate Procedure is ensure that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NTPCBC) complies with its legal obligations under relevant legislation, and to ensure the risk of damage to hearing from exposure to noise is at the lowest level reasonably practical.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Corporate Directors

Corporate Directors shall be responsible for the overall implementation of this Corporate Procedure.

2.2 Heads of Service

Heads of Service shall be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this Corporate Procedure and will ensure the provision of the necessary resources to ensure a safe system of work, comply with the requirements of the policy and the regulations.

2.3 Governing Bodies of Schools Maintained by Education Authority

There is a shared overall responsibility for health, safety and welfare between the LEA, governing body and headteacher.

2.4 Managers/ Team Leaders/Headteachers

2.4.1 Managers/ Team Leaders/Headteacher are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Corporate Procedure within their workplaces to comply with management guidance.

2.4.2 Managers/Team Leaders/Headteachers shall also ensure that the findings of the noise assessments are communicated to all staff within their section, and ensure that they are adequately trained in the implementation of the control measures and procedures for completing tasks safely.

2.5 Employees

Each employee of the Authority shall: -

- Take reasonable care to ensure their safety and that of others and adhere to the Authority's Policy on managing the risk of exposure to noise.
- Adhere to the Noise Assessments carried out and control measures required while exposed to noise.
- Inform their managers of any change in their health status which may be affected by exposure to noise.
- Use appropriate controls where provided for a task in order to avoid or reduce the risks associated with exposure to noise. The controls should be used in the manner in which the employee has been instructed and for its intended purpose.
- Co-operate with Managers / Team Leaders to ensure they have attended the necessary training. Adhere to the information given and convey relevant information to other colleagues where necessary.
- The employee has the right to refuse to carry out (according to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHAWR)), a task where the potential risk of injury is likely and unreasonably high; and where the risk could reasonably and practicably be avoided by the provision of training, instruction, information, supervision and appropriate resources.
- Comply with the Authority's accident and hazard reporting procedures in all cases involving injuries, incidents or near misses affecting themselves, other colleagues, service users or non-employees.

3 Management of Noise at Work

3.1 To manage noise at work in a safe and sensible manner and to reduce the risk of damage to hearing, the following six steps, listed in sequential order, must be followed:

- (i) Carry out an assessment of the exposure to noise
- (ii) Record of the assessment
- (iii) Take action, if necessary, to reduce the risk of exposure to noise
- (iv) Identify ear protection zones
- (v) Monitor the position
- (vi) Provide information, instructions and training to employees

Each of the above six steps are described in detail below to ensure that they are applied in a consistent manner across Directorates:

3.2 Step one - Carry out an Assessment of the exposure to noise

3.2.1 Where an employee's exposure level is likely to exceed the following levels: -

- Lower Exposure Action Value – 80dB
- Upper Exposure Action Value – 85dB
- Exposure Limit Value – 87dB

Then a “competent person” i.e. a person who is qualified to undertake noise readings, **must** undertake an adequate noise survey/assessment.

3.2.2 The noise assessment shall: -

- Identify noise levels recorded on previous assessments and the duration of exposure
- Identify which employees are exposed
- Measure current noise levels and duration of individual exposure
- Provide information and recommendation on the risk to which those employees may be exposed to Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher
- Lead to appropriate action being taken
- Identify the need for further specialist advice

3.2.3 Since the assessment is a “snap-shot” in time, it is important that the assessment is reviewed. A review **must** be carried out if: -

- There is a reason to suspect that the assessment is no longer valid
- There is an installation or removal of machinery
- There is a substantial change in workload, work pattern exposure times, processed materials, processes or machine speeds take place
- There is a change(s) in building structures or machine layout are made
- Machine wear or general deterioration takes place
- There is a modification to machinery and the introduction of automation
- A noise or hearing conservation programme takes place.
- There is a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates.

- New and expectant mothers are involved in the work activity.

3.2.4 Where, as a result of the above noise assessment review, changes in the assessment are required, the Manager/Team Leaders/Headteacher, Occupational Health Adviser (OHA) and Employee must be informed of these changes.

3.2.5 Young Persons

There are specific legal requirements as regard to the exposure of young employees, aged under 18 to noise. Advice **must** be sought from the Corporate Health and Safety Section before the young person is employed in order that the requirements are met.

3.3 *Step Two - Record of the assessment*

The Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher and the Directorate Health and Safety Officer must keep a record of the noise assessment, which is to be made available to employees and/or the employees' representatives upon request. The assessment shall contain the following information:-

- Noise exposure assessment. (These shall include details of workplaces, areas and jobs that require or have been assessed, the result of the assessment, when the assessment took place, and who undertook it)
- Details of further workplace areas to be assessed.
- Actions taken as a result of noise exposure assessments, with prioritised action plan to include dates.
- Changes in work practices, which affect noise exposure levels, i.e. new machinery, changes in layout, noise reduction measures etc.
- Details of the supply of personal ear protection and details of its maintenance and replacement.
- Complaints/comments made by employees regarding the effects of noise and details of any action taken in response to these complaints.

3.4 *Step Three – Take action, if necessary, to reduce the risk of exposure to noise*

Following on from the assessment and the recording of the readings etc. the following action must be taken

3.4.1 **Reading at or above the Lower Exposure Action Value (80dB): -**

When an employee or others are likely to be exposed to noise at or above the Lower Exposure Action Value then the Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher

shall ensure personal hearing protectors are made available upon request to any employee who is so exposed.

3.4.2 Reading at or below the Upper Exposure Action Value (85dB): -

When an employee or others are likely to be exposed to noise at or below the Upper Exposure Action Value then the Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher shall ensure personal hearing protectors is provided to any employee who is so exposed.

3.4.3 Reading at or below the Exposure Limit Value (87dB): -

Where the daily noise exposure of any employee, or others, is likely to be at or below the Exposure Limit Value, it is the responsibility of the Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher to reduce the exposure of those employees or others. This must be achieved, so far as is reasonably practicable, by means other than the provision of personal ear protectors. In order to achieve this, Managers/Team Leaders /Headteachers must implement a programme of control measures that will reduce the noise levels in the working environment or the time employees are exposed.

3.4.4 Where it has not been feasible to reduce the noise levels by controlled measures then the Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher must provide all exposed employees with suitable hearing protection, and ensure that it is worn. The protection must be capable of reducing the exposure to below the Exposure Limit Value.

Ear protection must be regarded as a last resort and is not an alternative to reducing noise at source.

3.4.5 Employees must make full and proper use of all equipment, including ear protectors, which that the Managers\Team Leaders/Headteachers provide. Any defects in equipment provided must be reported to his/her Mangers/Team Leader/Headteacher for immediate action.

3.4.6 Managers/Team Leaders/Headteachers must ensure that all equipment provided by them for the benefit of their employees or others in compliance with their duties under this procedure is fully and properly used. This involves regular checks and maintenance of equipment.

3.5 *Step Four - Identification of Hearing Protection Zones*

Where an employee is likely to be exposed to noise at or above the upper exposure action value the Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher must ensure that:

- Each hearing protection zone is marked and identified by means of a sign complying with the Health and Safety Signs Regulations 1996 which stipulates that: -
- It is an hearing protection zone, and the need for employees and others to wear suitable personal ear protectors while in that zone
- Employees or others are not to enter the zone unless they are wearing appropriate personal ear protection.

3.6 Step Five – Health Surveillance (Audiometry)

3.6.1 Where the risk assessment identifies employees who are exposed to noise levels above the Upper Exposure Action Values (85dB) the Manager/Team Leader/Headteacher shall by contacting the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) ensure that such employees are placed under suitable health surveillance, which shall include testing of their hearing.

The categories of employees who will be tested are as follows:-

- Pre-employment (establish base line)
- On-going employees exposed to noise at or below the Upper Exposure Action Value during employment
- Employees prior to leaving the Authority (baseline)

3.6.2 Following completion of the audiometric questionnaire [CF/17/01](#) and returned to the OHA, a suitable appointment at the OHU will be arranged. The OHA will check with the employee that all the information on audiometric form has been completed including:-

- Personal details
- Job details, including when work in noisy areas started and ended
- Details of any known previous jobs involving exposure to high noise levels
- Medical history
- Hobbies

On completion and analysing the results the OHP/OHA will decide whether immediate action is required.

3.6.3 Employees who are subject to health or medical surveillance under these regulations must co-operate with all reasonable requests for information whether of a medical nature or not and must attend appointments made

for such surveillance activity. All appointments will be during working hours and at the expense of the employer.

3.7 Step Six - Provision of Information to Employees

Employees or others who are likely to be exposed to noise which is likely to be at or above the Lower Action Value, **must** be provided with appropriate information, instruction and training on:

- The nature of risks from exposure to noise
- The meaning of the exposure values
- The significant findings of the risk assessment, including any measurements taken, and an explanation of those findings
- The availability and provision of personal hearing protectors and their correct use.
- Why and how to detect and report signs of hearing damage
- The entitlement of health surveillance
- Safe working practices to minimise exposure to noise

4 Further Reading

- Noise at Work Regulations 1989
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- HSE Document L108: Reducing Noise at Work
- HSE Document: Noise at Work - Noise Guides 1 & 2
- HS(G) 56: Noise at Work – Noise Guides 3 – 8
- HS(G) 138: Sound Solutions – Techniques to Reduce Noise at Work
- Health and Safety Manual, Part 6.1: Risk Assessment and Safe Systems of Work.
- Health and Safety Manual, Part 8.3: Personal Protective Equipment.
- European Standard: BS EN 60651: 1994: Specification for Sound Level Meter