
Report To:	Policy and Resources Committee	Date: 19 November 2013
Report By:	Head of Organisational Development, HR & Communications	Report No: HR/23/13/PR
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Subject:	Noise at Work Policy	

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to approve a reviewed Noise at Work Policy for the Council. (Appendix 1)

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 place a duty on employers to carry out assessments of the noise levels within their premises and to undertake appropriate preventative action where necessary. This policy formalises these requirements into a corporate policy.
- 2.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act places a duty on employers to prepare a written statement of their general policy and as part of that policy to have in place arrangements for the implementation of Health and Safety. The Noise at Work Policy will form part of the Council's arrangements for Health and Safety.
- 2.3 The policy sets out how the Council will control noise at work in line with the relevant legislation and HSE guidance documentation.
- 2.4 The Organisational Development Strategy was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2013. This particular proposal is contained within Theme 2 - *Leadership, Succession Planning and Skills Development (Employees our Most Valuable Resource)* and Theme 3 - *Employer of Choice (Continuous Improvement)* in that it focuses on the health, safety and welfare of our workforce.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is recommended to approve the Noise at Work Policy.
- 3.2 The Committee is asked to support this policy by active promotion of Health and Safety.

Head of Organisational Development,
Human Resources and Communications

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council is required to ensure that the risks to employee, from excessive noise at work are assessed in line with its legal duties as defined by the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 (as amended), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- 4.2 By law (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 section 2(3)) if you employ five or more people you must have a written health and safety policy. This contains a statement of general policy on health and safety at work and the organisation and arrangements in place for putting that policy into practice. The Noise at Work Policy details the arrangements the Council has in place for managing the risks to employee from noise at work.
- 4.3 The Noise at Work Policy sets a clear direction for the Council to follow; it will contribute to all aspects of business performance as part of a demonstrable commitment to continuous improvement. It will demonstrate a shared common understanding of the Council's vision, values and beliefs. A positive Health and Safety culture is fostered by the visible and active leadership of senior managers. This is reflected within the policy.
- 4.4 The policy consists of the following main sections:
 - Statement of Policy
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - How the Policy should be implemented
 - Management Requirements
 - Information and Training Requirements

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The Noise at Work Policy to be adopted by Inverclyde Council and used as a framework to further enhance the safety of employees and those affected by the work of the Council.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Finance: None
- 6.2 Human Resources: None
- 6.3 Legal: Failure to have a robust Policy in place and to implement it could result in enforcement action being taken against the Council.
- 6.4 Equality: None

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Noise at Work Policy has been coordinated through the Corporate Health and Safety Committee with Health and Safety seeking the views of both union and management colleagues. The Trades Unions have agreed the Policy.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Noise at Work Policy

Organisational Development and Human Resources

Noise at Work Policy

Version 3.0



Produced by:

Health and Safety, Human Resources

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November 2013

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Responsibility		
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Change History		
Version	Date	Comments
1.0	1999	Original
2.0	September 2007	Updated to reflect the requirements of the Noise at Work Regulations 2005
3.0	November 2013	Periodic review

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Policy Review		
Review Date	Person Responsible	Service
November 2017	Health and Safety Team Leader	OD, HR & Comms

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1 INTRODUCTION

Inverclyde Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of all employees by promoting a healthy and supportive working environment. The Council recognises the importance of managing workplace noise.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 place a duty on employers to carry out assessments of the noise levels within their premises and to undertake appropriate preventative action where necessary. The regulations apply to all workplaces throughout the Council e.g.

- Schools
- Offices
- Workshops
- Garages
- Parks

Hearing loss caused by work is preventable, but once your hearing has gone it will not come back. Some 17,000 people in the UK suffer deafness, ringing in the ears or other ear conditions caused by excessive noise at work.

Hearing loss is not the only problem. People may develop tinnitus (ringing, whistling, buzzing or humming in the ears), a distressing condition which can lead to disturbed sleep. Noise at work can interfere with communications and make warnings harder to hear. It can also reduce a person's awareness of his or her surroundings. These factors can lead to safety risks – putting people at risk of injury or death.

Is noise a problem?

You will probably need to do something about the noise if any of the following apply:

- the noise is intrusive-like a busy street, a vacuum cleaner or a crowded restaurant, or worse than intrusive, for most of the working day
- your employees have to raise their voices to have a normal conversation when about 2 metres apart for at least part of the day
- your employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour a day
- your work sector is one known to have noisy tasks, e.g. road repair, woodworking, engineering, general fabrication, waste and recycling
- there are noises due to impacts (such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools etc), explosive sources such as cartridge-operated tools or detonators, or guns

Situations where you will need to consider safety issues in relation to noise include where:

- you use warning sounds to avoid or alert to dangerous situations
- working practices rely on verbal communications
- there is work around mobile machinery or traffic

2 STATEMENT OF POLICY

Inverclyde Council will undertake to meet the requirements of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 (as amended), by undertaking a programme of noise assessments and implementing appropriate measures to reduce noise exposure.

The results of the assessments will be used as a basis to provide suitable information, instruction and training to employees to assist in the provision of appropriate management systems and equipment as required by the above regulations.

Directors will ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for all areas of operations for which they are responsible, to ensure compliance with duties placed on their Directorate.

3 AIMS

This policy aims to provide guidance and information to Services to help them to manage the risk of injury to or ill health to employees who carry out their work for the Council.

4 SCOPE

This policy applies equally to all employees regardless of grade, experience or role within the organisation. The policy also applies to contracted staff as far as is reasonably practicable.

5 CONSULTATION & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Inverclyde Council recognises the importance of employee consultation and is committed to involving all employees in the development of policies and procedures. The following groups are formally consulted:

- Trade Union Representatives through the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.
- All Chief Officers.
- Employees via the Council Intranet.

5.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out using the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment Template.

6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All Directorates will ensure a system is in place to identify areas requiring assessment and that appropriate steps are taken to reduce the exposure to noise within the workplace. Each assessment must be reviewed when there is reason to believe that the assessment is no longer valid e.g. when there has been a significant change to the workplace/work equipment, after a period of no greater than two years or on the request of the operator of the equipment.

6.1 Chief Executive, Corporate Management Team and Chief Officers

The Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team are responsible for overall implementation of this Policy.

The Chief Executive will ensure that as far as is reasonably practicable adequate finance and other resources are allocated to ensure the health and safety of employees and those other persons who may be affected by the activities and actions of the Council with regard to workplace noise.

Corporate Directors and Heads of Service are responsible, as far as is reasonably practicable, for ensuring the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees in their respective service. These responsibilities are detailed in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy. With regard to Workplace

Noise, The Chief Executive, The Corporate Management Team, Corporate Directors and Heads of Service will ensure that:

- the Noise Policy is maintained and adhered to.

6.2 Corporate Directors

The Chief Executive has confirmed the Corporate Director, Education, Communities and Organisational Development with particular responsibility for corporate health, safety and welfare. This Corporate Director will take the overall lead on corporate health and safety issues affecting more than one department.

Corporate Directors and Heads of Service, have a collective and individual responsibility to employees in providing Health and Safety leadership within Inverclyde Council, they should ensure that their Directorate complies with all aspects of this policy.

6.3 Heads of Service

Heads of Service will have a pivotal role in the effective implementation of this policy. They shall be responsible for ensuring that suitable and sufficient arrangements are in place to implement the Noise Policy within their sphere of responsibility.

6.4 Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors

Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors will perform a crucial role in ensuring that this policy is implemented. They shall be responsible for ensuring that suitable and sufficient arrangements are in place to implement the Noise Policy within their sphere of responsibility.

Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors should ensure that where noise exposure is a risk factor for employees that the following are carried out:

- Identify activities likely to lead to noise exposure
- Identify persons likely to be affected including exposure patterns
- Arrange noise measurements for key areas of activity, review existing control measures and implement further controls as necessary.
- Record the findings including noise data obtained which provides important information for determining controls.
- Review and revise the risk assessments regularly.
- Implement appropriate hearing protection measures.
- Maintain control measures.
- Provide information, instruction and training about noise risks.
- Provide supervision to ensure safe methods of work are followed by employees.

6.5 Health and Safety Team Leader

The Council Health and Safety Team Leader shall ensure that the Noise Policy is monitored for effectiveness, is subject to regular review, and is revised when necessary. They shall do so in conjunction with the Corporate Health and Safety Committee, Heads of Service and Trades Union Safety representatives.

Noise assessments are to be carried out by a competent person; this can be an external contractor or the Council's Health and Safety Unit depending on the availability of a designated competent person. The H&S Team Leader shall ensure that all noise monitoring equipment is serviced and calibrated in accordance the Noise at Work Regulations.

The Health and Safety Section of Human Resources and Organisational Development will monitor Directorate compliance with this policy.

6.6 Corporate Health and Safety Committee

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented.

The safety committee will oversee monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy and other measures to reduce risks with regard to workplace noise.

6.7 Employee Responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they are complying with the health and safety procedures and requirements appropriate to their job. To achieve this, in relation to this Policy, employees should:

- ensure that they understand this policy and their obligations under it
- report any risks arising from workplace noise to their line manager
- comply with any safe system of work that has been implemented by the supervisor or line manager, an example of this would be to abide by any signage or instruction such as "hearing protection must be worn"

7 ARRANGEMENTS

7.1 Definitions

A number of specialist terms and phrases are used in this document; the main terms are defined as follows:

Daily personal noise exposure	is the level of the daily noise exposure of an employee, but taking no account of any personal protective equipment used.
Exposed	exposed to noise whilst at work.
Lower Exposure Action levels	a daily personal noise exposure of 80 dB (A)
Upper Exposure Action Levels	a daily personal noise exposure of 85 dB (A)
Levels not to be exceeded	a daily personal noise exposure of 87dB(A) peak sound pressure of 137 Pascal's
dB	the unit of measuring sound, the unit is a decibel.

dB(A)	refers to the unit of measuring sound as heard by the ear, the unit is also a decibel.
$L_{EP,d}$	the daily personal noise exposure over an 8 hour working day.
L_{eq}	the exposure to noise over the period of noise measurement.

7.2 Implementation

7.2.1 Assessment of Exposure

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, require the employer to assess the noise levels within the workplace. The assessment should involve the measurement of sound at the operators ear and provide enough information to determine if the exposure to noise exceeds the action levels indicated within the regulations.

Directorates will develop management systems to clearly identify areas of operation that may constitute a noise "hazard". Directorates should contact the H&S Team Leader to arrange noise assessments of those "noise hazard" areas. The noise assessments shall be used to formulate a directorate action plan to reduce noise exposure.

The assessment process should clearly identify:

1. Which employees are exposed
2. What noise sources they are exposed to
3. To what extent they are exposed, and
4. The information required to facilitate:
 - a. Noise reduction at source
 - b. Provision of suitable hearing protectors
 - c. Demarcation of Hearing protection zones
 - d. Provision of information on exposure levels to employees.

The assessment will be reviewed when there is reason to suspect the original assessment is no longer valid including, for example, a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates.

Any scheme of assessment developed to comply with these regulations, should be developed in conjunction with the Health and Safety Team Leader.

Noise assessments will be undertaken by competent persons using equipment that is suitable and has been calibrated in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.

7.2.2 Record of Assessment

Any assessment carried out under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 shall be recorded in a format that includes details of:

- the work location
- the task being monitored
- when the assessment was undertaken
- persons involved in the assessment
- the results
- the recommendations

Directors will ensure that a system is in place within their directorate to record assessments in a suitable format and that these records are kept for future reference.

7.2.3 Controlling Noise

Directors will put into place systems to:

1. Eliminate risks from noise exposure completely where it is reasonably practicable to do so.
2. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks completely to reduce them to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.
3. Where any employee is likely to be exposed to a daily exposure in excess of the lower action level “80 dB(A)” but no greater than the upper action level “85 dB(A)” provision of:
 - Information and training on the risk from workplace noise and hearing damage.
 - Suitable and sufficient hearing protectors are available for employees.
4. Where an employees exposure to noise is likely to exceed the upper exposure action value “85 dB(A)” develop an action plan to reduce noise exposure. This should include:
 - Eliminating the risk e.g. can it be done another way e.g. without power tools.
 - Reduce the employee noise exposure e.g. purchase low noise equipment.
 - Isolate the noise source e.g. sound dampening material around the noise source. Equipment monitored/operated remotely.
 - Control methods to reduce employee exposure time to noise e.g. job rotation.
 - Provision of mandatory PPE e.g. ear defenders or ear plugs.
5. Ensure no employee is exposed above the exposure limit value “87 dB(A)”.

7.2.4 Risk Reduction

Directorates will put in place systems to reduce risks identified by noise assessments. There is an obligation for employers to :

1. Reduce risk of damage to the hearing of employees from exposure to noise, to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable
2. Reduce noise exposure, when any of his employees are likely to be exposed to the second action level or above or to the peak action level, so far as is reasonably practicable without the use of personal protective equipment.

Systems established to reduce the risks associated with noise, should consider the following:

1. Identifying the noise source
2. Identifying reasonably practicable steps to reduce noise level by engineering means
3. establishing priorities for action
4. ensure that action is taken
5. reassessment of noise exposure

7.2.5 Hearing Protection

Directorates shall ensure, that when any employee is likely to be exposed to a daily exposure in excess of the first action level but no greater than the second action level that suitable and sufficient hearing protectors are available for employees who ask for them.

Directorates shall ensure that when any employees are likely to be exposed to the second action level or above or to the peak action level or above, then employees will be provided with suitable personal ear protectors, which, when properly worn, could be expected to reduce the noise level at the ear to a level below the second action level or indeed the peak action level. The wearing of such hearing protection should, so far as is reasonably practicable, be enforced. Areas where hearing protection should be worn should be designated as Hearing Protection Zones.

Ear protectors must also be available for visitors who may access areas designated as Hearing Protection Zones.

7.2.6 Maintenance and Use of Equipment

All directorates will ensure that equipment provided to control noise at work, other than personal protective equipment, is properly maintained and used.

All directorates will make known to their employees the employees duties to make full and proper use of personal hearing protectors, in addition, there shall be a system in place to permit the maintenance of personal hearing protectors, including the methods of reporting faulty/broken equipment and its subsequent repair or replacement.

7.2.7 Supervision

All departments will ensure that there is in place a appropriate system of supervision to ensure that all systems and equipment provided to reduce workplace noise are used properly and in accordance with departmental guidance.

8 PROVISION OF TRAINING/INFORMATION ETC

Directorates will ensure that there is a programme of training and information provision as necessary, this programme of training/information will include:

1. Assessment information
2. General Noise Awareness
3. Employees Duties
4. How to use equipment provided to reduce the risks associated with workplace noise
5. Arrangements for the provision of hearing protectors

9 MONITORING, EVALUATION & REVIEW

This reviewed policy was ratified by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on xxxx and implemented immediately thereafter.

Regular monitoring and review are necessary to measure the effectiveness of the policy and to ensure it remains relevant to the needs of the Council. This policy will be subject to monitoring and review on a regular basis by the Corporate Health and Safety Section via the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.

The policy will be reviewed 12 months from implementation and every three years thereafter unless there is significant change in legislative requirements or risk assessment identifies a need for review. Measuring the effectiveness of the policy will include the auditing of compliance with this policy.

APPENDIX 1

1 GUIDANCE

1.1 Assessment of Noise Exposure

1.1.1 Competent Persons

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 clearly indicates that assessments be carried out by competent persons, this means that the employer will have to be sure that the assessment work is carried out by someone having the appropriate training and experience. The Health and Safety Executive indicate that the ability to understand and apply the Controlling Noise at Work ACOP L108 would demonstrate the appropriate level of competence. Departments should therefore ensure that persons undertaking noise surveys/assessments are at least competent to this level. Advice on this matter can be obtained from the Team Leader Health and Safety OD&HR.

1.1.2 Noise Assessments

The need for an assessment can be normally be determined without the need of noise measuring equipment, you can use the simple tests below.

Test	Probable noise level	A risk assessment will be needed if the noise is like this for more than:
The noise is intrusive but normal conversation is possible	80 dB	6 hours
You have to shout to talk to someone 2 m away	85 dB	2 hours
You have to shout to talk to someone 1 m away	90 dB	45 minutes

Table 1 Simple tests to see if a noise risk assessment is needed

Where there is any doubt about the noise levels then measurements should be taken, and if this indicates levels of exposure above the first action level then a more detailed assessment will be required.

Any assessment undertaken to comply with the Regulations will need to:

- Identify all workers likely to be exposed to noise at or above the first action level or at or above the peak action level.
- Provide further information, where action is considered necessary to assist the employer to reduce the risks.

It should be noted that it is possible to undertake an adequate assessment of risk, without monitoring every employee, the following advice is given in relation to the assessment of risk within groups of employees:

1. Where groups are employed in areas where the noise levels are uniform then it is acceptable to base an assessment on the noise levels in the working area and the length of time the employees spend in the area.
2. Where employees are employed to do similar tasks, then an assessment of a sample of employees can be used to provide a representative record of exposure.
3. Exposure calculations, and thus assessments may be adequate if information about the noise produced by machines is provided by the supplier/ manufacturer.

1.1.3 Noise Assessment Equipment

Equipment used to undertake assessments/ surveys needs to be suitable for the task and calibrated in accordance with the manufacturers instructions and certainly within the preceding 12 month period.

1.1.4 Octave band analysis

In circumstances where exposure levels approach or exceed 85 dB(A) then an Octave band analysis should be undertaken by the competent person and the information used to ensure that suitable control measures are introduced or maintained to control the frequencies identified as causing problems. In situations where hearing protectors are in use the octave band analysis should be used to ensure that the PPE provided has the correct attenuation.

Departmental arrangements should include systems to ensure that surveys/ assessments are undertaken using appropriate calibrated equipment and competent persons.

1.2 Records of Assessment

There are no defined standards of recording assessment results, the nature of the report is ultimately a choice for the competent person, however, any assessment carried out under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 shall be recorded in format that includes details of:

- the work location
- the task being monitored
- when the assessment was undertaken
- persons involved in the assessment
- the results
- details of instrumentation used and calibration confirmation
- the recommendations

Records of assessment should be kept in a form that is easily accessible.

Record of assessment should be kept until it is replaced by a new assessment with the old records then archived. Old records should only be destroyed with specific authorisation from the Council's Health and Safety Team Leader on a record per record basis.

1.3 Risk Reduction

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require the employer to reduce the noise at source and thus reduce the risk of hearing damage. As a result of assessment, departments may have to put in place measures to reduce the risks from workplace noise.

Departments should include as part of their "Safety Plan" indications of measures being undertaken to reduce the noise levels at source, this may include.

- planned maintenance systems
- asset replacement programmes or
- purchasing policies where departments take conscious decisions to purchase quieter machines

Where proposed reduction measures are not being implemented, reasons for the decision should be recorded.

In addition to the above steps, the assessment/survey should also identify steps that can be taken by the employer to reduce noise in the workplace. Often these will be simple cost effective measures, however, on occasions there may be a need to enlist the services of an acoustic engineer.

Any programme of noise reduction will actively consider the following:

- a) Identifying the major noise sources
- b) Identifying reasonably practicable steps that can be taken to reduce the noise level by engineered methods
- c) Establishing priorities for action
- d) Ensuring action is taken
- e) Re-assessment procedures

Resources allocated to the noise reduction programme should be allocated giving due regard to the following factors:

- a) The number of people who will benefit from the programmed measure
- b) The noise exposure levels involved in the work area
- c) The cost effectiveness of the engineering and/or organisational measures proposed, ie implement the most cost effective measures first
- d) The likelihood that the engineered methods proposed will produce measurable worthwhile results
- e) Environmental/operational factors that make the wearing of hearing protection undesirable.

1.3.1 Limiting exposure

It may be possible to reduce an employees noise exposure by limiting their time in a noisy work environment. The benefits from this are small and the operation of such a system is very difficult and fraught with supervision difficulties especially if you consider that halving the time of exposure will only equate to a 3dB(A) reduction in exposure. This method may however prove useful as a short term control measure if managed properly and perhaps combined with other techniques.

1.3.2 Noise refuges

In situations where employees are based in a continually noisy environment, it is recommended that consideration be given to the installation and use of noise survey and assessment undertaken by the competent person, alternatively advice can be obtained from the Council Health and Safety Team Leader.

1.3.3 Hearing Protection Zones

In situations where the noise level are such that an employee may attain an exposure equivalent to, or above, the second or peak action level then steps should be taken to erect suitable signs to show where employees are expected to wear hearing protectors.

Such signs must comply with the Safety Signs and Signals Regulations 1996 and be displayed at each entrance to the affected workplace and also at appropriate intervals within the workplace. The employer is required, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that all persons entering the nominated zone wear the required hearing protectors.



Hearing protection zone sign.

1.4 Hearing Protection

Where control of noise is not reasonably practicable, or indeed there is a delay before an employer is able to control the noise exposure effectively, then, there is a duty on employers to provide suitable hearing protection. Departments will have to make available on request, appropriate hearing protectors to employers who have a measured noise exposure between the first and second action levels (80-85 dB(A)).

There is a need to provide suitable information, instruction and training in the use of the PPE provided.

Where daily noise exposure is measured at above the upper exposure action levels or the peak action level, then, in the absence of other control measures, suitable PPE must be provided and worn together with suitable information, instruction and training.

1.4.1 Suitability of Hearing Protectors

Any hearing protection equipment provided to reduce exposure to noise must be of a suitable type. Departments must consider a number of factors before issuing PPE to employees.

Factors to consider include:

- a) Attenuation properties of the protectors at certain frequencies
- b) Frequency of use, ie, is it all day every day, or for one hour every week etc.
- c) Suitability of hearing protectors with other forms of PPE, eg, safety spectacles will often reduce the effectiveness of ear muff style protectors or safety helmets may make the use of certain ear muffs impossible
- d) Environmental conditions, eg, is it particularly hot or humid in which case standard ear muffs may be difficult to maintain
- e) Are employees working in particularly dirty environments where the hygienic condition of foam ear plugs may be difficult to maintain
- f) Are employees subject to ear infections, which make ear plugs inappropriate

1.4.2 AUDIOMETRIC TESTING

Where employees undertake work regularly at noise levels in excess of the upper exposure action levels, they should be referred to Human Resources for referral to Occupational Health for audiometric testing at regular interval throughout their employment. Employees who also indicate that they have a family history of becoming deaf early on in life should also be referred to Human Resources for referral to Occupational Health. In order to provide a baseline and to identify potential hearing problems, pre-employment testing should be carried out and advice sought from the Councils Occupational Health provider.

1.5 Maintenance and Use of Equipment

Departments must ensure that equipment provided to reduce noise levels, must be maintained and used correctly

The following guidance relates to all equipment provided under these regulations:

1.5.1 Noise Control Equipment

Departments should have systems in place to check, on a regular basis, that all noise control equipment is in good condition and being properly used. Should any deficiencies be found during the check, or as a result of a reported fault, then the defect must be rectified promptly. To assist in this process, a suitable system to report defects/concerns should be established and made known to all appropriate employees. It is likely that this reporting system would be co-ordinated by a senior manager with the authority to rectify the defects.

1.5.2 Hearing Protection Programme

Departments are strongly encouraged to adopt a "Hearing Protection Programme", such a programme involves regular information, instruction and training to employee working in noisy environments, this can be achieved through:

- a) Appropriate statements and information within the departmental safety arrangements.
- b) Appropriate signs and information notices throughout the workplace advising persons where and when to use noise reduction equipment/personal protective equipment
- c) Allocation of clear responsibilities in terms of co-ordination of the hearing protection programme, the distribution of hearing protectors and the maintenance of protectors and other noise protection equipment
- d) Suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training on all aspects of noise and the systems of control
- e) Appropriate record systems, that are able to indicate the types of PPE issued, any repairs/problems identified with the issued equipment and the level of instruction, information and training given.
- f) Use of a monitoring system to ensure that all of the above operate in accordance with departmental instructions and guidance. Such monitoring might include: Spot checks, feedback systems on suitability of measures/equipment, links to disciplinary procedures.

1.6 Provision of Training/Information etc

There is a legal requirement for the department to provide "adequate information, instruction and training on all aspects of noise control. The provision of such training and information could be through a number of methods, for example:

- Noise Information sheet (Appendix 2)
- "Tool box talk" (Appendix 3)
- Training briefings
- Short courses
- Demonstration by supervisors
- Employee training programme
- Video presentations etc.

Any information given, must be in a form that is easily understood by employees and should consider some essential factors, these factors include:

A programme of training/information will include:

1. The likely noise exposure, based on assessment results and the risk to hearing
2. How to report defects in hearing protectors and noise control equipment
3. Where and how ear protectors can be obtained and how to use them
4. The employees duties under the regulations
5. The steps that an employee can take to minimise the risk of hearing damage
6. Advise on the symptoms and signs of hearing damage and the steps to take if concerned
7. How to use equipment provided to reduce the risks associated with the workplace

2 SUPERVISION

It is often the case that although employers put in place many of the systems contained within this and other guidance documents, inadequate supervision of the work activity can result in the system being ineffective.

It is therefore stressed that supervision of Noise Control Programmes. Hearing Protection Programmes or other departmental measures, put in place to comply with these regulations, is vital and that adequate supervision levels must be maintained and monitored by the department.

3 EMPLOYEES DUTIES

Any training programme or information system put in place by a department should detail the employees duties under these regulations. The employees duties are detailed below:

Employees have a duty to:

- 1) co-operate with the assessment of noise exposure
- 2) use noise control measures, such as exhaust silencers and machine enclosures, in accordance with departmental instructions
- 3) wear hearing protectors provided at or above the upper or peak action levels and in areas marked as a "hearing protection zone"
- 4) take care of personal protective equipment and noise control equipment provided, making use of storage accommodation after use
- 5) report, in accordance with departmental procedures, any defect found in hearing protectors or noise control equipment.

4 RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following noise guidance can be found on the HSE website:

- Controlling noise at work. Guidance on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.[1]
L108, ISBN 0 7176 6164 4 HSE Books
This book replaces the 1998 edition of L108 Reducing Noise at Work. Guidance on the Noise at Work Regulations (ISBN 0 7176 1511 1).
- Sound Advice: control of noise at work in music and entertainment. HSG260[2]. HSG260, 0 7176 6307 1 HSE Books.
This book contains practical guidance on the control of noise at work in music and entertainment.
- HSE's free employers leaflet Noise at Work - Advice for employers INDG362 (rev 1)[3]
This leaflet is for employers on good practice and considering what they need to do
- Noise - Don't lose your hearing (HSE's free pocket card) INDG363[4]
Contains notes on good practice which you may find helpful.

APPENDIX 2

Information Sheet No. 17

Noise at Work Regulations 2005

Information Sheet No. 17

Noise at Work Regulations 2005

The Noise at Work Regulations provide a legal framework to protect people from the effects of prolonged exposure to excessive noise levels. Employers and employees have legal responsibilities to ensure their health and safety at work.

What is noise?

For the purpose of the Noise at Work Regulations, 'any audible sound' is treated as noise. In non-legal terms noise is usually defined as 'any unwanted sound'.

How noise is measured

Noise is measured in decibels (dB). An 'A-Weighting' sometimes written as dB(A) is used to measure average noise levels, and a 'C weighting or dB(C)' to measure peak, impact or explosive noises.

You might just notice a 3dB change in noise level, because the way our ear works. Yet every 3dB doubles the noise, so what might seem like small differences in the numbers can be quite significant.

Some useful definitions

dB - decibel, a measurement of sound.

dB(A) - reflects how the hearing mechanism of the body works.

Lep,d - a is the daily personal noise exposure level.

First (lower) Action Level - an Lep,d of 80 dB(A).

Second (upper) Action Level - an Lep,d of 85 dB(A).

Peak Action Level - a peak sound pressure of 200 pascals.

The Legal Requirements

Employer's Duties include:

- Identify activities likely to lead to noise exposure;
- Identify persons likely to be affected, including exposure patterns;
- Undertake noise measurements for key areas of activity, and review existing control measures and implement further controls as necessary;
- Record the findings, including noise data obtained, which provides important information for determining control;
- Review, revise and audit the risk assessments of their implementation.

Employee's Duties Include:

- Use ear defenders when they are provided by employer;
- Use any other protective measures provided by employer, in compliance with these regulations;
- Report any defects, concerning the protective equipment and control measures, to the employer.

Noise and Hearing

The tissue in the inner ear, like any other tissue, can be damaged, and this damage will depend on the level of the sound, its duration, and to some extent on its frequency.

Exposure to a quieter noise for a long period of time could be just as damaging as exposure to a louder noise for a shorter period.

Clearly the level of sound is important, the loudest sounds causing the most damage. The duration of the sound is also important, since the effect of deafness is progressive, and the ear must be allowed to recover from any exposure. Hearing damage in most cases cannot be cured medically or surgically, and the use of hearing aids will not usually solve problems.

Remember: young people can be damaged as easily as the old.

Some noise levels of specific activities

Some examples of typical noise levels are shown. This indicates that a quiet office may range from 40 - 50dB, while a road drill can produce 100 -110 dB.



Ear protectors

Types of protectors

Ear muffs – these are normally hard plastic cups which fit over and surround the ears, and are sealed to the head by cushion seals filled with soft plastic foam or a viscous liquid. The inner surfaces of the cups are covered with a sound absorbing material, usually a soft plastics foam.

- ear plugs – these fit into the ear canal. There are different types of ear plugs available:
- Permanent – can be used for an infinite time; available in a range of sizes.
- reusable – can be used a few times; must be cleaned regularly.
- Disposable – are thrown away after one use; can usually fit most people without requiring specialist fit.

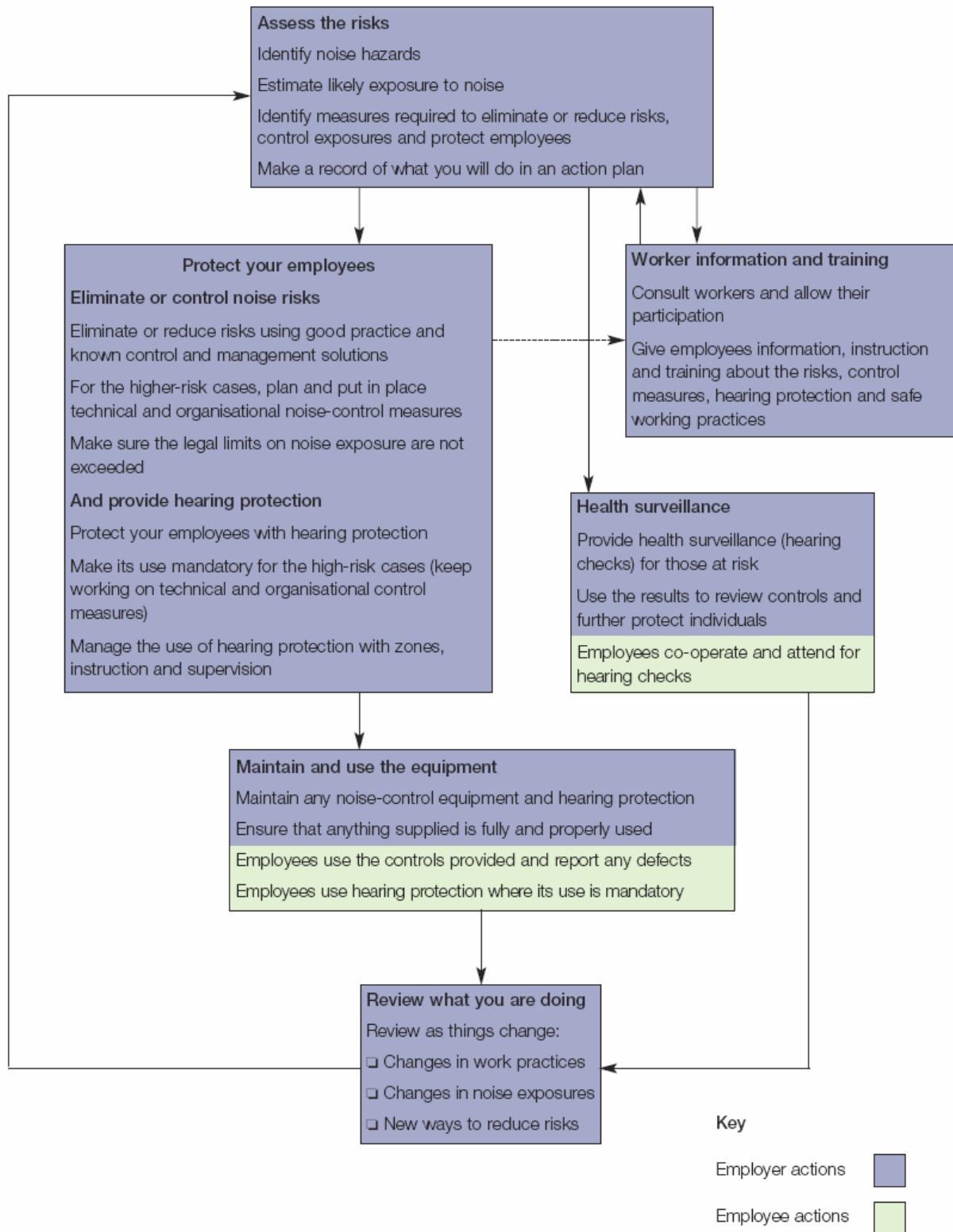
Noise Assessments

A noise assessment is required where an employee is likely to be exposed at or above the First or the Peak Action Level. The assessment will need to:-

- identify all workers likely to be exposed, and
- Provide information to indicate where action is needed and help the employer decide what further action is appropriate.

Assessments should be based on reliable information about work patterns and noise levels, so the affected employees and their safety representatives should be consulted; this will also help ensure their co-operation with any control measures that might turn out to be needed.

Managing Noise Risk



APPENDIX 3

Toolbox Talk: Noise

Toolbox Talk: Noise

Noise



The law

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require employers to take action to prevent or reduce risks to health and safety from noise at work.

Loud noise at work can damage your hearing. This usually happens gradually and it may only be when the damage caused by noise combines with hearing loss due to ageing that people realise how impaired their hearing has become .

Why is dealing with noise important?

- Noise at work can cause hearing damage that is permanent and disabling. This can be gradual, from exposure to noise over time, but damage can also be caused by sudden, extremely loud, noises. The damage is disabling in that it could stop you being able to understand speech, keep up with conversations or use the telephone.
- Hearing loss is not the only problem. You may develop tinnitus (ringing, whistling, buzzing or humming in the ears), a distressing condition which can lead to disturbed sleep.
- Noise at work can interfere with communications and make warnings harder to hear. It could also reduce awareness of your surroundings. These factors can lead to safety risks – putting your colleagues and others at risk of injury or death.

How would you recognise a noise problem?

We will probably need to do something about the noise if any of the following apply:

- the noise is intrusive-like a busy street, a vacuum cleaner or a crowded restaurant, or worse than intrusive, for most of the working day
- You have to raise your voice to have a normal conversation when about 2 metres apart for at least part of the day
- You use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour a day

- our sector is one known to have noisy tasks, e.g. construction, road repair, woodworking, engineering, waste and recycling
- there are noises due to impacts (such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools etc), explosive sources such as cartridge-operated tools

Situations where we need to consider safety issues in relation to noise include where:

- You use warning sounds to avoid or alert others to dangerous situations
- Your working practices rely on verbal communications
- You work around mobile machinery or traffic

How can we control noise?

There are many ways of reducing noise and noise exposure. There are practical, cost-effective actions to control noise risks. Guidance is available e.g. HSE's noise at work website or Council Intranet H&S pages.

First, we think about how to remove the source of noise altogether, for example housing a noisy machine where it cannot be heard by you.

If that is not possible, other safe methods of work may include:

- You use quieter equipment
- You use screens, barriers, enclosures and absorbent materials to reduce the noise
- You limit the time you operate noisy equipment
- You limit the time spent in noisy areas/rooms
- You wear PPE provided e.g. Ear Defenders, Ear Plugs

When should personal hearing protection be used?

Hearing protection (PPE) shall be issued to you:

- where extra protection is needed above what has been achieved using other noise control methods
- for short-term protection, while other methods of controlling noise are being developed
- where hearing protection zones are designated/signposted

You shall receive PPE training on the following:

- » **Correct use**
- » **Storage**
- » **Reporting damage or loss**

Detecting damage to hearing

You shall receive suitable health surveillance (regular hearing checks) should the following apply:

- If you are frequently exposed to noise above the upper action level (85dB(A))
- If you indicate that you have a family history of deafness developing early on in life
- If you inform your Supervisor of an existing hearing problem

Further help and guidance is available to you from:

- HSE website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/>
- Council intranet: <http://icon/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-policy-and-guidance/noise-work/>
- Council Health and Safety Section on Ext: 4723