Corporate Health, Safety and Emergency Management and Wellbeing Service

Management of Noise at Work Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 It is the policy of Swansea Council (Authority) to meet its legal obligations to protect its employees and those engaged in providing services to the Authority from ill health resulting from excessive exposure to noise of all types arising from Authority’s activities.

1.1.1 The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require employers to ensure that workers’ hearing is protected from excessive noise at their place of work, which could cause them to lose their hearing and/or to suffer from tinnitus.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 In line with the Corporate Health and Safety Policy, the Authority recognises and accepts its duties and responsibilities to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and others who may be at risk from its activities.

2.2 This document is a corporate policy with Service Units supplementing it by having in place their own procedures and guidelines, which reflect the principles of this policy and the individual needs of their Service Units.

2.3 All Directorates and Services within the Authority must be able to demonstrate compliance with this policy via audit.
2.4 Serious and deliberate violation of the Authority’s Corporate Health & Safety Policy, health and safety rules and standards may be viewed as gross misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy of Swansea Council.

2.5 The Authority will put in place measures to protect its workers from the risks to the health, safety and wellbeing as a result of noise at work. This includes noise induced hearing loss and tinnitus; along with safety issues where workplace noise can interfere with safety communications, make warnings harder to hear and reduce workers awareness of their surroundings.

2.6 Managers may choose to delegate their duties but can not delegate their responsibilities.

3. **Scope**

3.1 This policy applies to all employees, volunteers (including those supplied through projects), agency staff, work experience, contractors engaged by Swansea Council or its representatives and elected members who are all required to comply.

3.2 In relation to health surveillance, this policy only applies to employees of Swansea Council.

3.3 When considering the terms on which work, services or supplies should be provided to the Authority, the relevant procuring officer will ensure specific provision in the contract concerning the health, safety and wellbeing of the contractor, its staff, Swansea Council employees and the public.

3.3 This policy relates to workers exposure to noise which arises while at work, or arises out of or in connection with work activities.

4. **Definitions**

4.1 **Noise** means any audible sound.

4.2 **Worker** a person is generally classed as a worker if they have a contract or other arrangement to do work or services personally for a reward. Their reward is for money or a benefit in kind.

4.2 **Exposure limit values and action values**

The lower exposure action values are:
- a daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 80 dB (A-weighted); and
- a peak sound pressure of 135 dB (C-weighted).
The upper exposure action values are:
- a daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 85 dB (A-weighted); and
- a peak sound pressure of 137 dB (C-weighted).

The exposure limit values are:
- a daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 87 dB (A-weighted); and
- a peak sound pressure of 140 dB (C-weighted).

4.3 Daily personal noise exposure is the level of daily personal noise exposure of a worker to noise at work (normalised to an 8 hour day), taking account of all noise, the level of noise and the duration of exposure.

4.4 Weekly personal noise exposure is the level of weekly personal noise exposure, taking account of all noise, the level of noise and the duration of exposure.

4.5 Exposure limit value is the level of daily or weekly personal noise exposure or of peak sound pressure which must not be exceeded.

4.6 Lower exposure action value is the lower of the two levels of daily or weekly personal noise exposure or of peak sound pressure which, if reached or exceeded, require specified action to be taken to reduce risk.

4.7 Upper exposure action value is the higher of the two levels of daily or weekly personal noise exposure or of peak sound pressure which, if reached or exceeded, require specified action to be taken to reduce risk.

4.8 Peak sound pressure is the maximum sound pressure to which an employee is exposed.

4.9 Working day is a daily working period, irrespective of the time of day when it begins or ends, and of whether it begins or ends on the same calendar day.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Cabinet

5.1.1 The Cabinet will nominate one of its members as the portfolio holder for health, safety and wellbeing issues. The Cabinet will promote this policy and comply with its provisions.

5.2 Chief Executive

5.2.1 With reference to the Corporate Health and Safety Policy, the Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees and others who may be affected by the Authority’s undertakings.
5.3 **Corporate Management Team**

5.3.1 The Corporate Management Team will be collectively responsible for strategic health and safety planning and for periodic review of health and safety performance.

5.4 **Directors/Chief Officers**

5.4.1 Ensure Heads of Service deliver their responsibilities under this policy and report any failings or barriers that may affect compliance to the Corporate Management Team.

5.4.2 Ensure that the Heads of Service and all managers comply with procurement procedures for equipment and specialist services.

5.5 **Heads of Service**

5.5.1 Ensure that suitable and sufficient arrangements, funds and resources are in place to manage noise exposure within their Service Unit.

5.5.2 Ensure that risk assessments are undertaken and risks are minimised in those areas of work, or circumstance where a predictable risk of noise exposure exists.

5.5.3 Ensure that adequate monitoring systems are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of local arrangements to minimise the risks related to noise exposure.

5.5.4 Review noise data, identify trends and take action as appropriate.

5.5.5 Identify key health and safety risks specified in the Service business plan, and ensure control measures are implemented to reduce the risk.

5.5.6 Ensure that there is effective consultation, and communication between management, trade unions and staff to address risks, and raise awareness of risks e.g. SMT, Team Briefs.

5.6 **Managers (as defined by the Corporate Health and Safety Policy)**

5.6.1 Managers are responsible for ensuring that suitable and sufficient arrangements are in place to implement this policy within their sphere of responsibility.

5.6.2 Assess the risks created by exposure to noise within their service unit or work location where work is liable to expose any workers to noise at or above a lower exposure action value. The risk assessment must identify the measures which need to be taken.
5.6.3 In conducting a noise risk assessment, managers must ensure the levels of worker noise exposure are assessed by means of:
- observation of specific working practices;
- reference to relevant information on the probable levels of noise corresponding to any equipment used in the particular working conditions; and
- if necessary, measurement of the level of noise to which his employees are likely to be exposed.

Managers are responsible for assessing whether any workers are likely to be exposed to noise at or above a lower exposure action value, an upper exposure action value, or an exposure limit value.

5.6.4 Ensure risk assessments include consideration of:
- the level, type and duration of exposure, including any exposure to peak sound pressure;
- the effects of exposure to noise on workers or groups of workers whose health is at particular risk from such exposure;
- any effects on the health and safety of workers resulting from the interaction between noise and the use of ototoxic substances at work (commonly used products such as aspirin, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and some antibiotics, that may cause hearing loss), or between noise and vibration;
- any indirect effects on the health and safety of workers resulting from the interaction between noise and audible warning signals or other sounds that need to be audible in order to reduce risk at work;
- any information provided by the manufacturers of work equipment;
- the availability of alternative equipment designed to reduce the emission of noise;
- any extension of exposure to noise at the workplace beyond normal working hours, including exposure in rest facilities supervised by the employer;
- appropriate information obtained following health surveillance, including, where possible, published information; and
- the availability of personal hearing protectors with adequate attenuation characteristics.

5.6.5 Ensure noise risk assessments are reviewed regularly, and if:
- there is reason to suspect that the risk assessment is no longer valid; or
- there has been a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates.

Ensure implementation of any changes required as a result of the review.
5.6.6 Consult with the workers concerned or their representatives on the assessment of noise related risks.

5.6.7 Record the significant findings of the risk assessment as soon as is practicable after the risk assessment is carried out or changed, including the measures implemented and intended for implementation.

5.6.8 Ensure that risk from the exposure of noise is eliminated at source or, where this is not practicable, reduced to as low a level as possible.

5.6.9 For workers likely to be exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value, ensure exposure is reduced to the lowest possible level by establishing and implementing a programme of organisational and technical measures appropriate to the activity. This excludes the provision of personal hearing protectors.

5.6.10 Ensure actions taken include consideration of:
- other working methods which reduce exposure to noise;
- choice of appropriate work equipment emitting the least possible noise, taking account of the work to be done;
- the design and layout of workplaces, work stations and rest facilities;
- suitable and sufficient information and training for workers, regarding correct use of work equipment, in order to minimise their exposure to noise;
- reduction of noise by technical means;
- appropriate maintenance programmes for work equipment, the workplace and workplace systems;
- limitation of the duration and intensity of exposure to noise; and
- appropriate work schedules with adequate rest periods.

5.6.11 Ensure workers are not exposed to noise above an exposure limit value. If an exposure limit value is exceeded:
- reduce exposure to noise to below the exposure limit value;
- identify the reason for the exposure limit value being exceeded; and
- modify the organisational and technical measures taken to prevent an exposure limit value being exceeded again.

5.6.12 Ensure where rest facilities are made available to workers, the exposure to noise in these facilities is reduced to a suitable level.

5.6.13 Adapt any control measure implemented to take account of any worker or group of workers whose health is likely to be particularly at risk from exposure to noise.
5.6.14 Make personal hearing protectors available upon request to any worker exposed to noise at or above a lower exposure action value. Where a reduction in noise level to below an upper exposure action value cannot be achieved by other means, provide personal hearing protectors to all workers exposed.

5.6.15 In any area of the workplace where an employee is likely to be exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value for any reason, ensure:
- the area is designated a Hearing Protection Zone;
- the area is demarcated and signage mounted specifying the requirement for mandatory use of ear protection;
- restrict access to the area to workers wearing personal hearing protectors.

5.6.16 Ensure the appropriate maintenance and proper use of work equipment.

5.6.17 Provide workers and their representatives with information, instruction and training to include:
- the nature of risks from exposure to noise;
- the organisational and technical measures taken to control the risks relating to noise exposure;
- the exposure limit values along with the upper and lower exposure action values;
- the significant findings of the risk assessment, including any measurements taken, with an explanation of the 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 requirement for health surveillance;
- safe working practices to minimise exposure to noise; and
- the collective results of any health surveillance undertaken, in a form calculated to prevent results from being identified as relating to a particular person.

Managers must update the information, instruction and training required to take account of significant changes in the type of work carried out or the working methods used.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that any worker, whether or not an employee, receives appropriate information, instruction and training.

5.6.18 Where noise measurements approach upper exposure action values, managers must contact the Corporate Health & Safety Service for advice on how to control the risks.
5.6.19 Ensure any employees reporting adverse health effects potentially caused by exposure to workplace noise are referred immediately to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit for medical assessment.

5.6.20 Report all diagnosed incidences of noise induced hearing loss on a HS1 form to the Corporate Health & Safety Service. Investigate the incidence, including review of the risk assessment, and contact the Corporate Health & Safety Service for advice. Take appropriate action to avoid reoccurrence.

5.6.21 Arrange for employees who are exposed to noise to have a baseline surveillance prior to the start of employment in role, and regular health surveillance. Keep the records and implement the recommendations on the health surveillance medical report in line with the Health Surveillance Policy.

5.6.22 Where, as a result of health surveillance, an employee is found to have identifiable hearing damage likely to be the result of exposure to noise, managers must ensure the risk assessment is reviewed, taking into account any advice provided by a doctor, occupational health professional or enforcing authority. Consideration must be given to assigning the employee to alternative work where there is no risk from further exposure to noise.

5.6.23 For employees found to have identifiable hearing damage likely to be the result of exposure to noise, managers must ensure continued health surveillance and provide for a review of the health of any other employee who has been similarly exposed.

5.6.24 Bring to the attention of senior managers any difficulties with operational policy procedure documents.

5.6.25 Hire or procure equipment with the lowest practicable noise levels that are fit for the purpose or task being undertaken and represent best practice and value for money.

5.6.26 Wherever possible, Service Units should standardise on one type of equipment to simplify the process of determining noise levels, noise auditing and equipment identification by employees.

5.7 Employees

5.7.1 Accept and understand their responsibility for reducing the risks of exposure to noise and to cooperate and comply with any instruction given by management which is provided for reasons of health and safety.

5.7.2 Understand and comply with this policy and all Swansea Council health, safety and wellbeing policies.
5.7.3 Employees will conduct work in a manner which is safe for themselves, their colleagues and members of the public who may be affected by the employee’s acts or omissions.

5.7.4 Where identified through risk assessment as a control measure, employees will attend any health and safety training provided and adopt the working practices.

5.7.5 Wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided to minimise risks when carrying out their duties, and be responsible for reporting if the PPE is damaged/not suitable for use.

5.7.6 Notify their manager and/or trade union representative if they become aware of a work situation where there is a risk to themselves or others which has not been adequately addressed.

5.7.7 Not engage in unsafe practices and take unnecessary risks which have the potential to harm themselves, colleagues or members of the public.

5.7.8 Comply with all instructions, control measures and guidance provided to them in the interests of their health, safety and wellbeing. Attend health surveillance appointments as directed by their manager and comply with the recommendations of the health surveillance medical report.

5.7.9 Raise with their manager any concern they have related to exposure to noise at work, with regard to problems or shortcomings they identify with safety arrangements (e.g. information, policy, guidance, local procedure/protocol, equipment, PPE).

5.8 **Corporate Health, Safety, Emergency Management and Wellbeing Manager**

5.8.1 Ensure the provision of advice and guidance via the Corporate Health & Safety Service to those identified as having responsibilities under this policy.

5.8.2 Deliver any mandatory health and safety training.

5.8.3 Collate all health surveillance data submitted by managers as a requirement of this policy, and ensure its analysis and interpretation.

5.8.4 Ensure that all accidents/incidents/near misses reported that are notifiable under RIDDOR are referred to the Health and Safety Executive.
5.8.5 Bring to the attention of the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Champion or Corporate Management Team any known serious or uncontrolled risks.

5.8.6 Advise the Authority on the delivery of a suitable health surveillance programme.

6. Health Assessment for New Employees

6.1 All employees due to start working in a noisy work environment will complete a new employee health questionnaire. If considered fit for the job role, within 3 months they will be referred by their manager to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit for a baseline assessment.

6.2 Should an employee be diagnosed with noise induced hearing loss the manager must report it to the Corporate Health & Safety Service on a HS1 form.

7. Review & Monitoring

7.1 The requirements of this policy will be monitored by way of a risk-prioritised process of auditing. All Service Units within the Authority must be able to demonstrate compliance with this policy.

7.2 The training and responsibilities of individuals will be monitored by the Authority through its management and appraisal processes.

7.3 Where necessary the Authority will take appropriate action to ensure that this policy is upheld.

7.4 This policy will be reviewed by the Corporate Health, Safety, Emergency Management and Wellbeing Manager every 3 years or if:

- New legislation is published or existing legislation is updated.
- New guidance is published or existing guidance is updated.
- Research, monitoring or auditing suggests that a review may be required.
- Incident investigation suggests that a review may be required.

8. Reference

- Management of Noise at Work Policy Guidance
- The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
• The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
• The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977
• The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996
• The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015