

## **NOISE AT WORK POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

The Health and Safety Executive define noise as “any audible sound”.

Exposure to high levels of noise can cause permanent incurable damage to hearing. The main factors being the noise level, the daily exposure and frequency over a period of time.

### **2. Policy Statement**

The Isle of Wight Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees. The Council recognises that noise at work is a health and safety issue, and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace noise.

This policy shall apply to everyone employed by the Council. Managers are responsible for implementation of the policy, and the Council is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

The Isle of Wight Council shall implement measures to protect employees and others from risks to health and safety arising from exposure to noise at work. Such measures shall include:

- Assessing the risks to employees and others caused by noise at work;
- Taking action to reduce noise exposure where a significant risk has been identified;
- Provision of hearing protection where it is not reasonably practicable to reduce noise exposure by other methods;
- Endeavouring to ensure that legal limits on noise exposure are not exceeded;
- Provision of relevant information, instruction and training for Isle of Wight Council employees;
- Implementation of health surveillance where a risk to has been identified;
- Ensuring the level of noise generated is taken into account when a new piece of equipment is purchased or hired for use by Isle of Wight Council employees.

### **3. Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 Heads of Service**

- Ensure that all managers and employees within the department discharge their responsibilities in accordance with this policy.
- Support managers in implementing measures required to achieve compliance with the Noise at Work regulations.

#### **3.2 Managers**

- Understand the scope and content of the Noise at Work regulations where this is

relevant to work carried out within their area of responsibility.

- Carry out and implement recommendations of noise risk assessments within their areas. Regularly review the assessment to ensure that the findings remain valid. Take action where required.
- Ensure that noise factors are taken into account when hiring or purchasing new equipment for use within their areas.
- Maintain good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are procedural changes and/or the installation of new equipment that is likely to present a noise risk to employees and/or others.
- Provide suitable information, instruction and training regarding noise risks, control measures in place, safe working practices and hearing protection.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that hearing protection equipment is properly used and adequately maintained.
- Identify employees at particular risk who may require health surveillance and refer such individuals to HR for monitoring by Occupational Health.
- Record the findings of the noise assessment, including those assessments for which no action was required.

### **3.3 Human Resources**

- Provide managers with relevant guidance on the noise policy.
- Provide support for individuals who have been absent due to noise at work. Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address noise by collating and examining sickness absence statistics.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals and encourage referral to occupational therapy where appropriate.

### **3.4 Health, Safety and Welfare Assistance Section**

- Provide specialist advice and guidance on workplace noise hazards.
- Support managers in implementing noise risk assessments.
- Inform the employer and the health and safety board of any changes and developments in the field of work-related noise.
- Monitor and review the efficacy of measures to reduce noise in the workplace.
- Audit compliance with this policy and the underpinning regulations.

- Maintain awareness of any changes or developments in relevant legislation, ensuring that the Isle of Wight Council Safety Board and designated Health and Safety Liaison Officers are kept cognisant of such changes as and when they come into effect.

## 3.5 Employees

- Raise issues of concern with your supervisor, line manager, safety representative or health and safety liaison officer.
- Undergo relevant training where required.
- Use all equipment and noise control measures in accordance with instruction, including personal hearing protection where required.
- Report any defects or difficulties with hearing protection and/or any other noise control equipment.
- Co-operate with any programme of health surveillance which is identified as necessary following risk assessment.

## 3.6 Health and Safety Liaison Officers

Health and Safety Liaison Officers should:

- be consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate unsafe levels of noise.
- be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process.
- participate in joint inspections of the workplace at least every three months to ensure that environmental noise is being properly controlled.

## 3.7 Health and Safety Board

- The Isle of Wight Council Health and Safety Board shall fulfil a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- The Health and Safety Board shall oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce noise and promote workplace health and safety.

## 4. Legal position

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 (the Noise Regulations) came into force for all industry sectors in Great Britain on 6 April 2006 (except for the music and entertainment sectors where they came into force on 6 April 2008).

The aim of the Noise Regulations is 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 (permanent ringing in the ears).

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 replace the Noise at Work Regulations 1989.

The Council also has duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

(MHSWR) in particular, to assess the risks to health and safety from work activities; and this should include risks of noise-related ill health arising from work activities. Under MHSWR and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers should make appropriate arrangements to address these risks; and should take measures to control that risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

European Framework Directive 89/391 requires that *“all employers have a duty to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to work”* insofar as they entail a risk to health and safety. This duty covers workplace noise and its causes.

## 5. Noise Levels

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.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require that specific action is taken at prescribed action values. This relates to the levels of exposure to noise experienced by employees over a working day or week, and the maximum level of noise (peak sound pressure) to which employees are exposed during a working day.

### 5.1 Lower exposure action values:

- Daily or weekly exposure of 80 dB(A)
- Peak sound pressure of 135 dB(A)

### 5.2 Upper exposure action values:

- Daily or weekly exposure of 85 dB(A)
- Peak sound pressure of 137 dB(A)

There are also levels of noise exposure which must not be exceeded...

### 5.3 Exposure limit values:

- Daily or weekly exposure of 87 dB(A)
- Peak sound pressure of 140 dB(A)

These exposure limit values take account of any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection.

## 6. Risk Assessment

A noise risk assessment is required wherever it is likely that exposure will occur at or above the lower exposure action value. The following examples may be considered as a rough guide:

- if noise is intrusive but normal conversation is possible, the likely noise level is approximately 80dB

- if it is necessary to shout in order to communicate with someone 2m away, then the likely noise level is approximately 85 dB
- if it is necessary to shout in order to communicate with someone 1m away, then the likely noise level is approximately 90 dB

Further approximate examples include:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>dB(A)</b>
Quiet office	40-50
Normal conversation	50-60
Loud radio	65-70
Tractor cab	75-85
Busy street	78-85
Power drill	90-100
Heavy lorry (7m away)	95-100
Bar of a night club	95-105
Road drill	100-110
Chain saw	115-120
Jet aircraft taking off (25m away)	140

## **7. Personal Protective Equipment**

Hearing protection may be used as an additional measure once noise has been reduced as far as is reasonably practicable by other means; or as an interim measure pending noise reduction. It should not be used as the sole method of protection if personal noise exposures exceed the upper action value (85dB).

## **8. Hearing protection zones**

Hearing protection zones should be established in any area where hearing protection is necessary, i.e. in areas where exposure to noise is above the upper action value of 85dB(A). The area must be clearly identified as a "Ear Protection Zone" and appropriate signage installed to indicate that the wearing of suitable hearing protection is mandatory in these areas.

## **9. Health Surveillance**

The Isle of Wight Council shall provide health surveillance for all employees who are likely to be frequently exposed above the upper exposure action values, or are at risk for any reason, eg they already suffer from hearing loss or are particularly sensitive to noise induced hearing loss, or have a family history of hearing difficulties.

Audiometric hearing tests for employees at risk, can be carried out by the IW Occupational Health Service.

**10. Information, Instruction and Training**

Employees likely to be placed at risk from noise exposure shall be given adequate information, instruction and training on the risk of hearing damage, possible remedial action and the use, fitting, cleaning and maintenance of personal protective equipment.