

Noise Control Policy

Approved By:	Policy and Guideline Committee
Date of Original Approval:	1 MARCH 2004
Trust Reference:	B7/2004
Version:	V6
Supersedes:	V5 May 2020
Trust Lead:	Neil Smith - Health and Safety Manager
Board Director Lead:	Mike Simpson - Director of Estates, Facilities & Sustainability
Date of Latest Approval:	18 August 2023 – Policy and Guideline Committee
Next Review Date:	October 2026

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DETAILS OF CHANGES MADE DURING THE REVIEW

Summary of changes 2023 review

1. Title page – Change Board Director Lead to Mike Simpson
2. Title page – Change Trust Lead to Neil Smith
3. Introduction – addition of points 1.3 – 1.6 and renumbering of former point 1.3 to 1.7
4. Section 4.1 Change of Executive Lead to the Director of Estates, Facilities & Sustainability
5. Addition of point 4.2.7
6. Addition of point 4.4
7. Addition of point 4.6
8. Relocate the Policy Monitoring Table from Appendix 1 to Section 7.
9. Remove reference to the Director of Safety and Risk from the Monitoring Table
10. Replace all references throughout the policy to the Health and Safety Services Team and Estates and Facilities Health, Safety and Compliance Team to Health and Safety Team
11. Addition of the Preliminary Noise Assessment Form - Appendix 3

KEY WORDS

Noise at work, Hearing, Noisy, Safety, Health Exposure Action Levels

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The trust recognises that Noise at Work can, at certain levels, damage your hearing. It can also increase stressors, cause distraction, loss of concentration and difficulty hearing others and as a result increase the risk of errors. It is also recognised that in some circumstances uncontrolled or persistent levels of noise can hinder patient recovery.
- 1.2 The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 apply to all workplaces and require all employers to carry out assessments of noise levels within their premises and take the necessary preventative action where necessary. These regulations define certain action levels based on the personal daily noise levels (LEPd) of members of staff, patients, and others.
- 1.3 In accordance with the UHL Health and Safety Policy, the Trust will adhere to the control measures hierarchy. The first step is to assess if the noise source(s) can be eliminated by altering the process or isolating the noisy equipment/machinery and/or segregating staff from the noise source(s). Secondly, the noise exposure level can be reduced by limiting individual staff member's exposure to the noisy environment. Finally, if all other options are still not enough to lower noise levels overall and if other options have been explored and deemed impractical, then the provision and use of hearing protection will be necessary.
- 1.4 **Lower Exposure Action Values**
- Where a member of staff is subjected to an average daily or weekly noise dose of 80 dB(A) or a peak sound pressure of 135 dB (C), the employer must inform the member of staff as to the level of their exposure, the risks entailed, instruct them in how to minimise those risks and provide them with hearing protection.
- 1.5 **Upper Exposure Action Values Action Level 2**
- Where the average daily or weekly noise dose reaches 85 dB (A) or a peak sound pressure of 137 dB (C), hearing protection becomes compulsory. The employer must ensure that hearing protection reduces the daily noise dose to below 85 dB, designates and identifies hearing protection zones, and does everything that is reasonably practicable to lower the daily noise dose to below 85 dB.
- 1.6 **Maximum Exposure Values**
- There are also levels of noise exposure which must not be exceeded. The daily or weekly exposure limit is 87 dB (A); and the peak sound pressure is 140 dB (C). These exposure limit values take account of any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection.
- 1.7 There may also be temporary or permanent noise sources that whilst not likely to damage hearing are likely to interfere with safe delivery of services or impact on patients, staff, and visitors. Whilst these noises may not be actionable under the Noise at Work legislation, there may be a positive benefit to be achieved by reducing the level or frequency of a particular source, or sources, of noise.

2 POLICY SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff employed by the Trust, either directly or indirectly, and to any other person or organisation which uses Trust services or premises for any purpose. It will also apply to bank, temporary staff, volunteers, young workers, staff working from home and contractors working on Trust business. The principles of this policy shall apply to all Trust work activities, regardless of who has or who is supplying or providing them.

3 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Control Measure – any measure to reduce hazards in the workplace, e.g., procedures, physical measures, mechanical devices, personal protective equipment, restricted access zones.
- 3.2 “Noise” means any audible sound.
- 3.3 dB – measurement of noise (Decibels).
- 3.4 Pascal – measurement of noise pressure.

4 ROLES WHO DOES WHAT

4.1 Executive Lead (Director of Estates, Facilities & Sustainability)

To act as the executive lead and has the responsibility, accountability, and ownership for this policy together with its implementation

4.2 Management Responsibilities

- 4.2.1 Where Managers or Supervisors have carried out and documented a risk assessment (refer to the Health and Safety Policy) and/or have completed a Preliminary Noise Assessment Form (Appendix 3) that has identified areas or activities where they consider noise exposure to be a significant hazard, they should contact the Health and Safety Team to arrange to visit the particular ward/department/area and carry out a noise survey if appropriate, to complement the Risk Assessment.
- 4.2.2 Where noise levels are below the lower exposure action values but are a frequent cause of distraction or irritation managers should consider the impact this noise may have on health care provision and consider the risks this presents to the health or safety of staff and others. (For example, risk of error or sleep disturbance hindering patient recovery).
- 4.2.3 Where noise is at, or above actionable levels is identified or suspected (See appendix 1- Action Levels) managers must ensure they carry out the actions detailed below.
- 4.2.4 Where the daily exposure reaches the lower exposure action value, the Manager must:
- Ensure that a suitable noise assessment is carried out by a competent person.
 - Provide adequate information, instruction, and training to affected members of staff, about the risks to hearing and the steps to be taken to minimise those risks.
 - Provide hearing protection to those members of staff who request them, and ensure that any such equipment is used, maintained, and replaced as appropriate.
 - Ensure that all equipment and other measures provided to reduce noise exposure is used and maintained.

- Assess the risk as 'Medium' and review the risk assessment every three months.
- 4.2.5 If the exposure levels exceed the higher exposure action value, Managers must:
- Reduce exposure to noise as far as is reasonably practicable, by means other than hearing protectors.
 - If exposure cannot be reduced, Managers must provide hearing protection and ensure that it is used.
 - Establish 'Hearing Protection Zones' and identify them with the appropriate hazard warning notices.
 - Ensure that all those entering the hearing protection zone always wear the appropriate hearing protection provided.
 - Ensure that any risk assessments and arrangements are reviewed as detailed in the Health and Safety Policy, i.e.:
 - High Risk – within 1 month
 - Medium Risk – within 3 months
 - Low Risk – annually
 - Ensure staff receive Health Surveillance that includes a regular hearing test organised through the Occupational Health Department.
 - Assess the risk as 'High' and review the risk assessment every month.
 - Consider whether a Risk Management Assessment form needs completing and the risk entering on the risk register.
- 4.2.6 If the exposure levels reach the maximum exposure values with hearing protectors, then work must cease immediately, and the Health and Safety Team must be informed.
- 4.2.7 When it has been identified that staff need to wear hearing protection, it is important to ensure that other potential hazards are not introduced, such as not being able to hear moving vehicles or fire alarm activation. These should be risk assessed and reduce the risk; control measures should be implemented e.g. clear signage, easy to follow instructions, buddy system.

4.3. Staff Responsibilities

- 4.3.1 Members of staff must make full and proper use of anything provided by the Trust to reduce exposure to noise. The only exception is for ear protection that is provided on request, to those who are exposed below the second or peak action levels and following an assessment.
- 4.3.2 If staff suffer any kind of problem with their ears such as irritation of the ear canal, earache, discharge in the ear or are under medical treatment for any ear disease; ear plugs are not to be worn without having sought medical advice as to whether it is safe to continue to do so.
- 4.3.3 Members of staff have a duty to take care of any ear protectors supplied by the Trust. They should be stored appropriately and periodically cleaned using warm, soapy water, followed by thorough rinsing and dried completely before re-use.
- 4.3.4 Members of staff should regularly check their hearing protectors for torn plastic seals, cracked ear shells and damaged headband fastenings.
- 4.3.5 If any hearing protection is defective, damaged, or not fitting correctly, the member of staff has a legal duty to inform their immediate line manager(s).

4.3.6 Members of staff must report any concerns about noise in the workplace to their line manager(s) immediately. Guidance for estimating noise levels is contained in Appendix 2, section 1.

4.4 Health and Safety Team

4.4.1 The Health and Safety Team will provide advice, guidance and information concerning noise at work to support the work of managers and staff and where appropriate will conduct noise level assessments.

4.5 Occupational Health

4.5.1 The Trust's Occupational Health Service will provide confidential and impartial advice to managers and staff on health related matters and will provide health surveillance programmes (hearing checks) where it has been identified that there is a need for them.

4.6 Contractors/Specialists

4.6.1 Where necessary the Trust will procure external contractors / specialists to advise on noise issues outside of existing competencies.

5 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

5.1 The intended outcome of this policy is that:

- Managers are aware of the Noise at Work Regulations and that Noise levels are monitored and recorded, and action taken where required.
- Noise is reduced to below the action levels or else ear protection is provided.
- Staff are made aware of noise levels and their rights to either request ear protection or as required are obligated to wear ear protection.
- Ear protection is used as intended by staff

6 EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

6.1 Information and instruction must be provided to the staff members to ensure that they know the following:

- The risk(s) of noise at work.
- The actions taken by managers to reduce the risk.
- Actions that the staff member must take including wearing of ear protection, how to use and clean the ear protectors and recognising defects in ear protection.
- How to report loss or defects to the ear protection.

Information, instruction, and training will only be deemed suitable if it is understood by the person receiving it. Training should include theoretical and practical elements. Information can be provided on request from the Health and Safety Team.

7 PROCESS FOR MONITORING COMPLIANCE

- 7.1 The application and effectiveness of this policy will be monitored annually, using both active and re-active methods of data and information collection, such as Datix incident reporting, investigation, and task analysis. The results will be analysed and reviewed by the Health and Safety Team. A report will be presented to senior managers, where there are significant risk implications or new and emerging trends that require specific risk reduction actions.

Element to be monitored	Lead	Tool	Frequency	Reporting arrangements
Staff are following the arrangements	Line manager	Observations Completion of the Preliminary Noise Assessment form	As set by local manager. This may be influenced by concerns or incidents reported.	Notify any concerns to individual staff members / team. Report concerns with CMG Quality & Safety / Integrated Boards or Trust implications to the Health and Safety Team Ongoing concerns to be reported to the Health and Safety Team
Policy arrangements are in place, applied and effective	Local Managers Health and Safety Team	Investigation of concerns, incidents, and near-miss events Audits and Inspections Investigation of RIDDOR reportable events	Annually Annually	Report findings on Datix Feedback to individual/staff group RIDDOR report including recommendations to key stakeholders including UHL Health and Safety Committee and relevant CMG Quality & Safety / Integrated Boards

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Trust recognises the diversity of the local community it serves. Our aim therefore is to provide a safe environment free from discrimination and treat all individuals fairly with dignity and appropriately according to their needs.
- 8.2 As part of its development, this policy and its impact on equality have been reviewed and no detriment was identified.

9 SUPPORTING REFERENCES, EVIDENCE BASE AND RELATED POLICIES

- 9.1 This policy was developed with reference to 'The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and approved code of practice and related regulatory good practice guidance.
- 9.2 The following documents are supporting policies that provide advice and guidance to managers and staff, to enable the safe management of services: This is not an exhaustive list and may be added to, as additional policies and guidance documents are created to meet identified needs:

UHL Health and Safety Policy	A17/2002
UHL Risk Management Policy	A12/2002
Work Equipment Policy	B8/204
Personal Protective Equipment Policy	B9/2004
Incident and Accident Reporting Policy	A10/2002

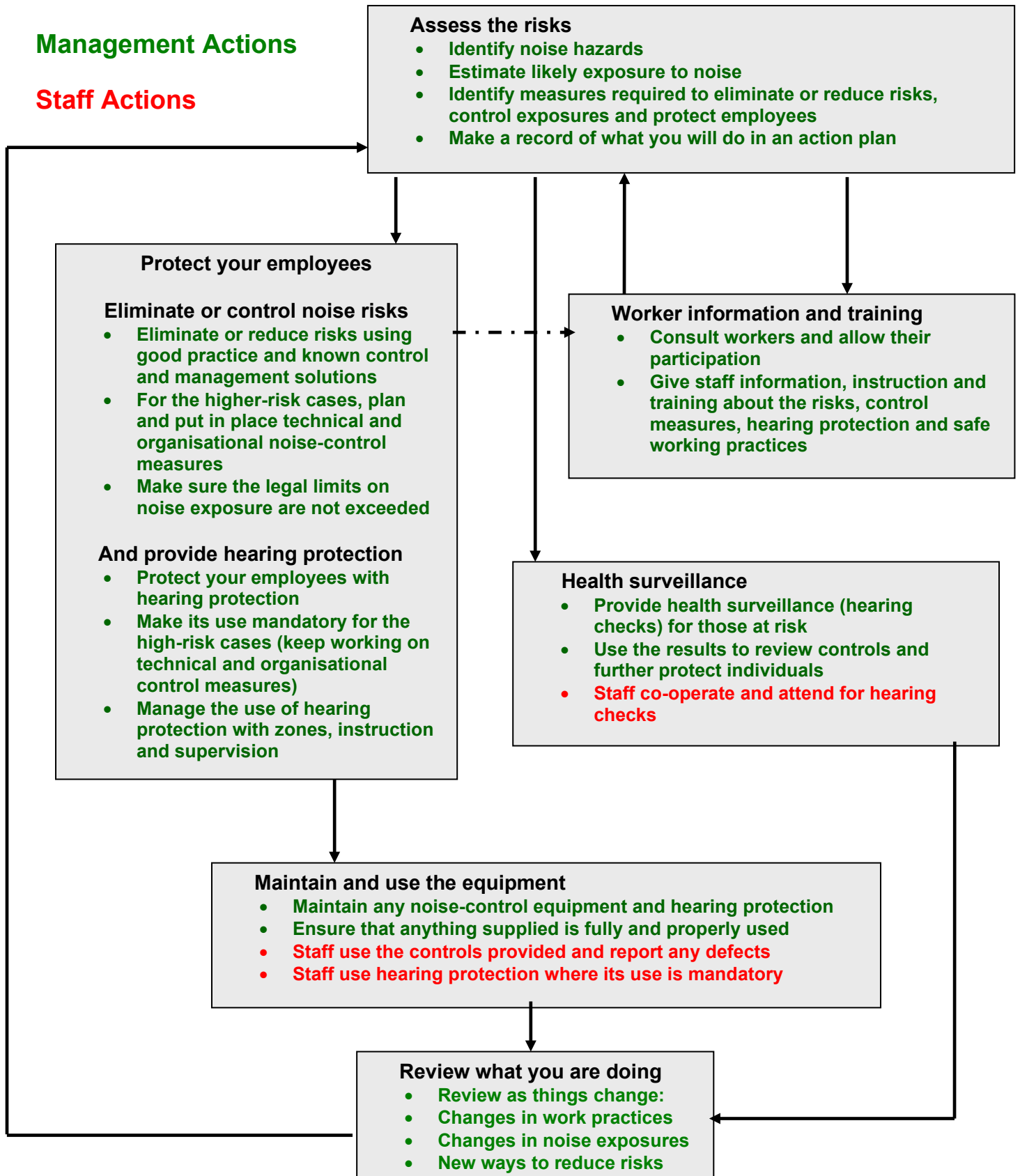
10 PROCESS FOR VERSION CONTROL, DOCUMENT ARCHIVING AND REVIEW

- 10.1 This document will be uploaded onto SharePoint and available for access by Staff through INsite. It will be stored and archived through this system.
- 10.2 The UHL Health and Safety Committee through the Health and Safety Team are responsible for keeping this policy up to date.

Flowchart for Managing Noise at Work


Management Actions

Staff Actions



APPENDIX 2

Management and Staff Guidance Note Noise in the Workplace

University Hospitals of Leicester 
NHS Trust
B7/2004

1. When is a risk assessment required?

The guide in the table (1) below provides a rough estimate to help managers decide if a 'Noise level' risk assessment is needed. Where criteria 2 & 3 are met assistance must be sought from the Health and Safety Team to establish the actual noise levels.

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	80dB	6 hours
You have to shout to talk to someone 2m away	85dB	2 hours

2. New, Replacement and Re-located equipment

Where new equipment is being introduced, or existing equipment replaced or re-located, the noise levels that this equipment will emit should be established.

An assessment of the risks to health and safety of staff and others should be carried out, so that the noise levels produced are adequately controlled. The assessment should be made at the earliest possible opportunity and preferably at the design stage, prior to installation, to ensure the equipment or ancillary parts (such as compressors or motors) are appropriately sited to eliminate or reduce the noise produced to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

3. Action Levels

3.1 Lower Exposure Action Values

Where a member of staff is subjected to an average daily or weekly noise dose of 80 dB(A) or a peak sound pressure of 135 dB (C), the employer must inform the member of staff as to the level of their exposure, the risks entailed, instruct them in how to minimise those risks and provide them with hearing protection.

3.2 Upper Exposure Action Values Action Level 2

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3.3 Maximum Exposure Values

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APPENDIX 3

Preliminary Noise Assessment Form

CMG/Corporate Directorate	
Speciality	
Department/Section	
Site	
Activity Location	
Work Activity	
Persons affected	
Manager	
Date of Assessment	

This forms part of the general risk assessment of your work activities and Managers should answer each question to identify if a full Noise Risk Assessment needs to be carried out.

	Consider	YES	NO
1.	Do you work in a noisy environment? <i>e.g., maintenance, manufacturing, dentistry, surgical, waste, etc.</i>		
2.	Do your staff use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day in total?		
3.	Are there noises due to impact (such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools, drills, etc.)?		
4.	Are there areas of the workplace where noise levels could interfere with warning or danger signals?		
5.	Are staff exposed to noise which makes it necessary to shout to talk to someone 1metre away, for more than about half an hour per day in total?		
6.	Are staff exposed to noise which makes it necessary to shout to talk to someone 2 metres away, for more than 2 hours per day in total?		
7.	Is conversation at 2 metres possible, but noise is intrusive-comparable to a busy street or crowded restaurant- for more than 6 hours per day in total?		

If you answer 'Yes' to any of the questions above, you should contact the Health and Safety Team for further advice and guidance.

Name of Assessor:	Signature:	Date:
Manager's Name:	Signature:	Date: