



**Community Infection Prevention and Control
Policy for Domiciliary Care staff**

Safe management of linen, including uniforms and workwear

**SAFE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN,
INCLUDING UNIFORMS AND WORKWEAR**

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Organisation:

Signed:

Job Title:

Adoption Date:

Review Date:

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1. Introduction

This Policy is one of the 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) referred to by NHS England in the *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*.

Used laundry, e.g. linen (sheets, bedding, towels), service users clothing and staff uniforms or workwear, can become soiled with blood, faeces, other body fluids and microorganisms, e.g. bacteria and viruses. Therefore, when handling used laundry, it is essential that care is taken to prevent the spread of infection.

All used laundry should be washed appropriately ensuring the correct temperature is achieved to destroy microorganisms. Microorganisms that remain after washing are usually destroyed by tumble drying and ironing.

Always use SICPs and, when required, 'Transmission based precautions' (TBPs), refer to the 'SICPs and TBPs Policy'.

When caring for service users in relation to any new or emerging infection, staff should refer to national infection prevention and control guidance.

2. Handling of used linen and clothing

All used linen should be handled with care and attention paid to the potential spread of infection. Service users and staff must not be put at risk during the handling, disposal and transportation of dirty linen and clothing.

- Staff should ensure cuts and broken skin are covered with a waterproof dressing when handling all linen.
- Disposable apron and gloves should be worn when:
 - Straightening beds or handling used, soiled or infected linen and clothing
 - When there is a risk of exposure to blood and/or body fluids
 - The service user has a confirmed or suspected infection
- Care should be taken to prevent unnecessary shaking of linen as this will increase the number of microorganisms in the air.
- Linen should be removed from a service user's bed with care, folding sheets inwards and rolling them up.

- Used linen and clothing should be placed in a container or bag, not placed on the floor or other surfaces.
- After handling used, soiled or infected linen and removing gloves, hands must be cleaned with liquid soap and warm running water, drying them thoroughly using paper towels. If paper towels are not available, the use of kitchen roll or a clean linen towel for use by the carer only and laundered daily is acceptable. Alternatively, alcohol handrub can be used. Please note, alcohol handrub should not be used if hands are dirty, visibly soiled or dealing with a service user with *C. difficile* or viral gastroenteritis, e.g. Norovirus. Refer to 'Hand hygiene Policy'.

3. Laundering service user's linen and clothing

- To prevent contamination of hands, the sink and surrounding environment, staff should not rinse soiled linen and clothing by hand. Soiled items should be washed on a pre-wash cycle.
- Used linen and clothing should be laundered on the highest temperature possible for the item or as recommended on the washing instruction label.
- Tumble drying and/or ironing linen will further reduce microorganisms.
- If the washing machine and/or dryer are in the kitchen, do not sort laundry and prepare food at the same time.

4. Handling of clean linen and clothing

- A disposable apron and gloves are not required for making beds with clean linen.
- Hands must be clean when handling clean linen and clothing.
- There is no need to wear a disposable apron or gloves when unloading washing machines, tumble dryers or when ironing.

5. Uniforms and workwear

- Uniforms and workwear worn by staff when carrying out their duties should be clean and fit for purpose.
- Uniforms and workwear should specifically support good hand hygiene.
- Wear a clean uniform or workwear daily, and if it becomes visibly soiled, change as soon as possible.
- Uniforms and workwear should be laundered separately from other clothing on a hot wash cycle (60°C) or at the highest temperature on the washing

instruction label that the fabric will tolerate.

- Garments should be dried thoroughly. Tumble drying or ironing will further reduce the small number of microorganisms that may be present after washing.
- It is best practice to cover uniforms completely when travelling, collecting children, food shopping or undertaking other activities in public.

6. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training

The Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team have produced a wide range of innovative educational and IPC resources designed to assist Domiciliary Care in achieving compliance with the *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance* and CQC registration requirements.

These resources are either free to download from the website or available at a minimal cost covering administration and printing:

- 24 IPC Policy documents for Domiciliary Care staff
- Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for Domiciliary Care staff
- IPC audit tools, posters, packs, leaflets and factsheets
- IPC Bulletin for Domiciliary Care staff

In addition, we hold educational study events in North Yorkshire.

Further information on these high quality evidence-based resources is available at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk.

7. References

Department of Health and Social Care (Updated December 2022) *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance*

Department of Health (2016) *Health Technical Memorandum 01-04: Decontamination of linen for health and social care: Management and provision*

NHS England (Updated 2024) *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*

NHS England and NHS Improvement (April 2020) *Uniforms and workwear: guidance for NHS employers*