

Welcome to our January 2025 Newsletter! This month we cover Environmental Cleaning and Policies.

Definition of healthcare outbreak: an incident in which 2 or more people experiencing a similar illness are linked in time or place.

How to Report an Outbreak:

1. Send an email to UKHSA at london.region@ukhsa.gov.uk for general queries, or use phe.london.region@nhs.net for sending patient identifiable information (PII).
2. Be sure to copy (CC) the NEL IPC team email (nelondonicb.ipc.@nhs.net).
3. The NEL IPC Team will follow up with you promptly to provide further assistance.

Figure 1: National colour-coding scheme

Why is Environmental Cleaning Important?

Surfaces and equipment in healthcare and community settings can harbour harmful pathogens for extended periods. Proper cleaning and disinfection can break the chain of transmission, protecting both staff and vulnerable individuals.



Key Principles of Environmental Cleaning

Routine Cleaning:

- High-touch surfaces (e.g., bed rails, doorknobs, light switches) should be cleaned frequently, ideally at least daily, using approved disinfectants.
- The environment should be routinely cleaned in accordance with the National Cleaning Standards

Outbreak Cleaning:

- During outbreaks (e.g., Norovirus or covid), enhanced cleaning protocols should be implemented. Ensure thorough disinfection of communal areas and isolation rooms.

Choosing the Right Products:

- Use disinfectants effective against common pathogens, including chlorine-based products for virus outbreaks like Norovirus.

Cleaning Equipment:

- Reusable cleaning equipment (e.g., mops, cloths) must be cleaned and disinfected after each use to prevent cross-contamination.

Training and Awareness:

- All cleaning staff should receive regular training on infection control practices, including the correct use of cleaning agents, PPE, and hand hygiene.
- staff groups should be aware of their environmental cleaning schedules for their area and clear on their specific responsibilities

Key Focus Areas

- **Patient Areas:** Ensure patient rooms, bathrooms, and waiting areas are cleaned thoroughly to prevent healthcare-associated infections.
- **Shared Equipment:** Items like wheelchairs, hoists, and IV stands should be cleaned between uses.
- **Waste Management:** Dispose of waste appropriately and clean bins regularly to reduce the risk of contamination.

Role in Environmental Cleaning

Cleaning schedules should include:

- staff responsibilities
- cleaning frequencies
- cleaning methods

Infection prevention is a team effort. Whether you are a care provider, manager, or cleaner, your adherence to cleaning protocols is crucial for maintaining a safe environment

Importance of Policies for Health and Social Care services

Healthcare policies are crucial for ensuring consistent, high-quality care, improving access to services, and promoting equity. They guide resource allocation, regulate safety standards, and support public health goals like disease prevention. Policies also help control healthcare costs, manage ethical issues, and drive system reforms. By emphasising preventive care and addressing healthcare system deficiencies, policies ultimately lead to better health outcomes and a more efficient healthcare system.

Policies and other documents to prepare for Infection Prevention and Control visits

As part of the infection control audit, our team will request to review certain policies to ensure the service meets high care standards and that documentation aligns with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, Code of Practice on the Prevention and Control of Infections.

Below and on pag 3 is a list of the policies and other documents that need to be reviewed on the day of the visit, along with their rationale. Please ensure the documents are available to be checked on the day of the visit.

Policy/Audit requirements	Rationale and related guidelines
<p>The home has an up to date IPC policy in line with the Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections. (See appendix 1 for list of policies in relation to care setting)</p>	<p>Ensure the service has an up-to-date Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) policy to be compliant with Criterion 9 of the Health and Social Care Act that states the following: <i>The service provider should have and adhere to policies designed for the individual's care and for provider organizations that help prevent and control infections.</i> Health and Social Care Act: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-and-social-care-act-2008-code-of-practice-on-the-prevention-and-control-of-infections-and-related-guidance</p>
<p>Are the following Policies for the protection of staff in place and in date (reviewed within the past year)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·risk assessment of need for immunisation, in particular hepatitis B and COVID-19 immunisation ·health screening for communicable disease, including tuberculosis and where appropriate, blood borne virus (BBV) screening for those undertaking exposure prone procedures ·use of personal protective equipment (PPE), including staff training in the safe use and disposal of PPE ·post-exposure management, for example for inoculation injuries ·circumstances under which staff may need to be excluded from work or have their duties modified 	<p>Ensure the service has an up-to-date policy on the protection of staff and relevant vaccinations for compliance with Criterion 10 of the Health and Social Care Act that states the following: <i>The service provider will have a system or process in place to manage staff health and wellbeing and the organizational obligation to manage infection prevention and control</i></p>
<p>Does the home have a uniform/dress code policy in place? Is there evidence that this is being adhered to</p>	<p>Ensure the service has an up-to-date policy on the protection of staff and relevant vaccinations for compliance with Criterion 10 of the Health and Social Care Act. additional guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.england.nhs.uk/national-infection-prevention-and-control-manual-nipcm-for-england/ • https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/documents/uniforms-and-workwear-guidance-for-nhs-employers/
<p>Does the practice have a policy on safe handling & disposal of sharps?</p>	<p>Ensure an up to date sharps policy is available to be compliant with Criterion 9 of the Health and Social Care Act: Prevention of occupational exposure to blood-borne viruses (BBVs), including prevention of sharps injuries.</p>

Policy/Audit requirements	Rationale and related guidelines
<p>Infection Prevention and Control Training Matrix</p>	<p>Ensure that a Training Matrix showing staff compliance with IPC training is available during the visit to ensure compliance with Criterion 6. of the Health and Social Care Act that states the following: The registered provider should have systems in place to regularly assess the IPC (including cleanliness) skills and competencies of its directly employed staff and volunteers and review and update its training programmes as required.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence weekly flushing of underused taps to prevent Legionella? • Is there evidence of weekly water temperature check to prevent that water temperatures are not between 20-45 Celsius to prevent Legionella? 	<p>Ensure records of weekly water flushing and water temperature are available. Legionella bacteria is commonly found in water. The bacteria multiply where temperatures are between 20-45°C and nutrients are available. The bacteria are dormant below 20°C and do not survive above 60°C. Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal type of pneumonia, contracted by inhaling airborne water droplets containing viable legionella bacteria.</p> <p>See guidance below: https://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/legionella.htm#:~:text=Using%20temperature%20control,showerheads%20de%2Dscaled%20and%20cleaned.</p>
<p>The home has an annual IPC statement in place which provides a short review of any: • known outbreaks of infection • audits undertaken and subsequent actions • action taken following an outbreak of infection • risk assessments undertaken for prevention and control of infection • education and training received by staff • review and update of policies, procedures and guidance</p>	<p>If there service experienced any outbreaks in the past 12 months, ensure a statement is available to ensure compliance with Criterion 4 of the Health and Social Care Act that stated the following: Provide suitable accurate information on infections to service users, their visitors and any person concerned with providing further health and social care support or nursing/ medical care in a timely fashion.</p>



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References:

- NHS National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021
- National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Care Home Infection Prevention and Control Manual (CH IPCM)
- NHS England » Chapter 1: Standard infection control precautions (SICPs)