

February 2025

Welcome to our February 2025 Newsletter! This month we cover Uniform policy & laundry management.

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.

Uniform/Dress Code policy

Introduction: respecting the uniform policy for healthcare staff is crucial in preventing the spread of infections and maintaining a safe environment for both patients and staff. Proper uniforms are designed to minimise the risk of cross-contamination, as they help maintain hygiene standards and prevent the transfer of harmful microorganisms. Adhering to the uniform policy ensures that staff attire is clean, appropriate, and free from contaminants, reducing the likelihood of infections being transmitted within healthcare settings. Ultimately, following the uniform guidelines is a key part of safeguarding patient health and controlling the spread of infectious diseases.

Please note: staff members working in areas where uniforms are not required (such as supported living services) should still adhere to the Infection Prevention and Control principles outlined below and in accordance with the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual.

Recommended Practice	Why?
Wear soft-soled shoes, closed over the foot and toes.	Closed shoes offer protection from spills and dropped objects. Open shoes increase the risk of injury or contamination for staff. Soft soles reduce noise in wards.
Wear short-sleeved tops and do not wear long sleeves during patient care activity and while in the clinical area.	Cuffs at the wrist become heavily contaminated and are likely to come into contact with patients.
Change into and out of uniform at work or cover uniform completely when travelling to and from work.	There is no evidence of an infection risk from travelling in uniform, but many people perceive it to be unhygienic.
Wash uniforms and clothing worn at work at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric (organisations should take this into account before purchasing uniforms that can only be washed at low temperatures or are dry clean only).	A wash for ten minutes at 60°C removes almost all micro-organisms. Washing with detergent at lower temperatures – down to 30°C – eliminates MRSA and most other micro-organisms.
Have clean, short, unvarnished fingernails.	Clean nails are hygienic and look professional. Long nails are harder to keep clean and are a potential hazard.
DO NOT wear false nails or nail polish.	False nails harbour micro-organisms and make effective hand hygiene more difficult.
DO NOT Wear any jewellery, including a wrist-watch, on the hands or wrists during direct patient care activity and hand hygiene (local policies may allow a plain ring such as a wedding ring)	Jewellery and watches can harbour micro-organisms and make effective hand hygiene more difficult.
DO NOT Wear neckties/lanyards (other than bow-ties) during direct patient care activity	Ties have been shown to be contaminated by pathogens and can accidentally come into contact with patients. They are rarely laundered and play no part in patient care.
Where, for religious reasons, members of staff wish to cover their forearms or wear a bracelet when not engaged in patient care, ensure that sleeves or bracelets can be pushed up the arm and secured in place for hand washing and direct patient care activity. Disposable over-sleeves, elasticated at the elbow and wrist, may be used but must be put on and discarded in exactly the same way as disposable gloves. Strict procedures for washing hands and wrists must still be observed.	Hand hygiene is paramount, and accidental contact of clothes or bracelets with patients is to be avoided.

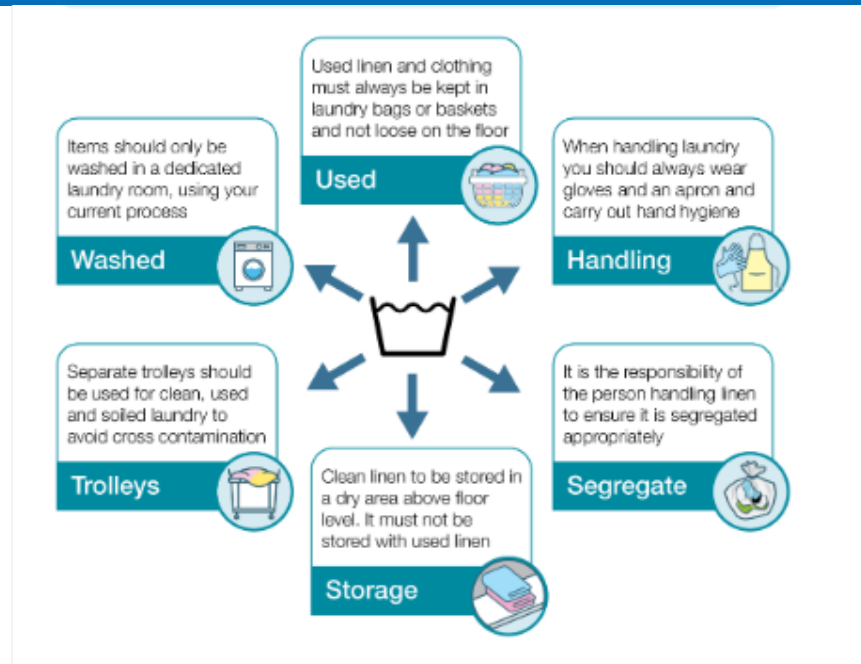


Laundry management

Proper laundry management in care homes is crucial for infection prevention, resident comfort, and overall cleanliness. Following best practices ensures that linens and clothing are hygienically cleaned, reducing the risk of cross-contamination and maintaining a safe environment for both residents and staff.

The key principles for safely handling laundry are:

- wash hands between handling clean and used or infectious laundry
- prevent cross contamination between clean and used or infectious laundry
- use separate containers for clean and used or infectious laundry
- do not shake used or infectious laundry
- do not place used or infectious laundry on the floor or on surfaces
- use an apron to protect worker clothing from used or infectious laundry
- infectious laundry:
 - do not wash by hand
 - use the appropriate pre-wash cycle
 - launder separately from other items
 - launder at appropriate temperatures



There are 3 categories of laundry:

Clean

Store clean linen in a clean, designated area, preferably an enclosed cupboard.

Used

All dirty linen should be handled with care, and attention paid to the potential spread of infection..

Handle used laundry safely by wearing a single use or washable apron to protect your clothing if necessary. Avoid:

- shaking or sorting laundry on removal from beds
- placing used laundry on the floor or any other surfaces
- re-handling used laundry once bagged
- overfilling laundry receptacles (not more than two-thirds full)
- placing inappropriate items in the laundry receptacle

Infectious

- Infectious laundry includes laundry that has been used by someone who is known or suspected to be infectious and/or linen that is contaminated with body fluids.
- Seal infectious laundry in a water-soluble bag (appropriate for the washing machine used) immediately on removal from the bed and then place this within an impermeable bag.
- Place water-soluble bags containing infectious laundry directly into the washing machine without opening the bags.
- Use separate containers for transporting clean laundry, and used or infectious laundry, and wash infectious laundry separately.
- Clean hands between handling different categories of laundry.
- Where workers are responsible for laundering the clothing of a person with an infectious illness, these should be laundered at the highest temperature possible recommended by the manufacturer .
- Within care homes, consider processes that will help ensure dirty laundry will not contaminate clean laundry. Consider having a dirty to clean flow system in laundry rooms so clean and used laundry are physically separated and ensure hand washing facilities are available where possible to do so.

Want to Learn More About Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)?

Join our upcoming IPC training session on 26th February at 10:00 AM to enhance your knowledge and best practices in infection prevention.

If you haven't already received the invite, email us at nelondonicb.ipc@nhs.net, and we'll be happy to forward it to you. We look forward to seeing you there!

IPC Team contact details
Generic email for advice: nelondonicb.ipc@nhs.net

Sandra Smith
Deputy Director of
Infection Prevention
and Control
Tel: 07769 382399

Loredana Nechita
IPC Support
Officer
Tel: 07939 196461

Gyanu Adhikari
IPC Clinical Nurse
Specialist
Tel: 07551 564659

Luca Comisi
IPC Clinical Nurse
Specialist
Tel: 07551 593253

References:

- **Infection prevention and control: resource for adult social care - GOV.UK**
- **Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Laundry Policy**
- **<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/documents/uniforms-and-workwear-guidance-for-nhs-employers/>**
- **<https://www.england.nhs.uk/national-infection-prevention-and-control-manual-nipcm-for-england/>**