

Welcome to the March 2026 Newsletter! This month we covers : Environmental cleaning , Managing People with Cognitive Impairment in Infection Prevention and Control and Point of care testing .

Environmental cleaning

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

Figure 1: National colour-coding scheme



Managing People with Cognitive Impairment in Infection Prevention and Control

People living with dementia or other cognitive impairments may find it challenging to follow infection prevention measures, such as hand hygiene, mask-wearing, or isolation during outbreaks. In care settings, this can increase the risk of spreading infections, including respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses.

Key IPC considerations include:

- Tailored Communication: Use simple, clear instructions and visual prompts to encourage hand hygiene and mask use.
- Environmental Measures: Ensure common areas and high-touch surfaces are regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- Behavioural Support: Implement strategies to safely manage wandering or agitation during outbreaks while maintaining infection control.
- Staff Training: Equip care staff with skills to balance compassionate dementia care with IPC practices.

By integrating dementia-aware strategies into IPC, care homes can reduce infection risk while ensuring residents' dignity and wellbeing.



Point of care testing in adult social care setting

What is Point of Care Testing ?

- POC (Point-of-Care) testing refers to diagnostic tests that are performed at or near the place where care is delivered, rather than sending samples to a laboratory.
- In care homes, this usually means simple tests carried out by trained staff with rapid results often within minutes.
- These tests are designed to be quick, easy to use, and clinically actionable, supporting immediate decision-making.



Why POC testing is beneficial and innovative for care homes?

1. Faster clinical decision-making
 - Reduces delays associated with sending samples to labs and waiting for results.
 - Supports early treatment or reassurance when no intervention is needed.
2. Reduced unnecessary hospital admissions : Reduces avoidable A&E attendances and admissions.
3. Improved resident experience:
 - Minimises distress caused by hospital transfers and invasive investigations.
 - Enables care to be delivered in a familiar environment.
 - Supports person-centred care and dignity.
4. Better infection management and IPC benefits
 - Early identification of infectious causes supports prompt isolation and IPC actions. Helps reduce inappropriate antibiotic prescribing.
 - Supports antimicrobial stewardship and reduces resistance risk.
 - Improves outbreak response/ management
 - * Early detection
 - * Early isolation
 - * Protection of other residents and staff
 - * Faster outbreak control
5. Supports multidisciplinary working
 - Enhances communication between care home staff, GPs, community nurses, and pharmacists.
6. System-wide efficiency
 - Reduces pressure on primary care, ambulance services, and acute trusts. Aligns with integrated care system (ICS/ICB) goals around prevention, early intervention, and out-of-hospital care.

Can contribute to cost savings when used appropriately and safely.



Important considerations

To be effective, POC testing in care homes must be supported by:

- Clear clinical pathways and escalation criteria
- Staff training and competency assessment
- Robust governance, quality control, and documentation

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References:

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