



## Community Infection Prevention and Control Policy for General Practice

(also suitable for adoption by other healthcare providers, e.g. Dental Practice, Podiatry)

# Safe management of linen, including uniforms and workwear

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

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Organisation: .....

Signature: ..... Name: .....

Job title: .....

Adoption date: .....

Review date: .....

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# SAFE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN, INCLUDING UNIFORMS AND WORKWEAR

# SAFE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN, INCLUDING UNIFORMS AND WORKWEAR

## 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*.

The use of linen, such as blankets, pillowcases, fabric hand towels, in General Practice is not recommended as it is not practical to launder items between each patient. Best practice is to use disposable paper products, e.g. paper towels, couch roll.

Always use SICPs and, where required, 'Transmission based precautions' (TBPs), refer to the 'SICPs and TBPs Policy for General Practice'.

**When caring for patients in relation to any new or emerging infection, staff should refer to the latest national infection prevention and control guidance.**

GP Practices should ensure regular audits to monitor compliance with the Policy are undertaken to provide assurance.

## 2. Blinds, curtains and screens

All blinds, curtains and screens (disposable or fabric) should be visibly clean with no blood, bodily substances, dust, dirt, debris stains or spillages.

Blinds, curtains and screens should be included on cleaning schedules and records should be maintained for evidence/assurance.

The frequency of changing/cleaning is determined by assessing each functional area containing window blinds, curtains and screens, assessing and assigning the area to one of the six functional risk (F1-6) categories. In addition, any blinds, curtains or screens that are visibly soiled should be changed/cleaned immediately. Refer to the *National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021* for further information.

All fabric curtains and screens should be laundered by a professional laundry service. The washing process should have a disinfection cycle in which the temperature of the load is either maintained at 65°C for not less than ten minutes or 71°C for at least 3 minutes. Refer to the *Health Technical Memorandum*

01-04: Decontamination of linen for health and social care for further information.

### 3. Pillows and blankets

Pillows should be in a sealed wipeable cover with no tears and should be cleaned after use with a detergent wipe or with a '2 in 1' detergent and disinfectant product. Damaged or stained wipeable covers and/or pillows should be replaced.

Fabric pillow cases, couch sheets and 'modesty' blankets are not recommended as it is not practical to launder them after each patient use. Disposable couch roll should be used to cover the couch, pillow, or maintain the patient's modesty for procedures where this is required and disposed of after each use. The pillow/couch should then be decontaminated appropriately with a detergent or a combined '2 in 1' product.

### 4. Staff uniforms and workwear

The *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance* recommends that clothing/uniform and workwear policies ensure that clothing worn by staff when carrying out their duties should be clean and fit for purpose. Particular consideration should be given to items of attire that may inadvertently come into contact with the patient.

- Always:
  - Change in and out of uniform at work, or completely cover uniform when travelling to and from work
  - Wear a clean uniform at the start of each shift and have enough uniforms to facilitate this
  - Use personal protective equipment (PPE), e.g. disposable apron, to prevent contamination of uniform and workwear
- Uniforms and workwear should be:
  - Clean, fit for purpose and support good hand hygiene
  - Changed immediately if visibly soiled or contaminated
  - Laundered on a cycle of ten minutes at 60°C, which removes almost all microorganisms, or at the highest temperature that the fabric will tolerate
  - Laundered separately from other clothing if heavily soiled
  - Dried thoroughly. Tumble drying or ironing will further reduce the small number of microorganisms present after washing
- It is not good practice to wear neckties (other than bow ties) or lanyards during direct patient contact. Ties are rarely laundered and have been shown to become contaminated with pathogens, and can accidentally come into

contact with patients.

- Footwear must be well maintained, visibly clean, non-slip and support and cover the entire foot to avoid contamination with blood or body fluids or potential injury from sharps.

## 5. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training

The Community IPC Team have produced a wide range of innovative educational and IPC resources designed to assist your General Practice in achieving compliance with the *Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infection 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:

- 27 IPC Policy documents for General Practice
- Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for General Practice
- IPC CQC inspection preparation Pack for General Practice
- IPC audit tools, posters, leaflets and factsheets
- IPC Bulletin for General Practice 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](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk).

## 6. 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 (2013, updated 2016) *Health Technical Memorandum: 01-04 Decontamination of linen for health and social care: Management and provision*

NHS England (2022, updated 2023) *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England*

NHS England and NHS Improvement (April 2021) *National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2021*

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