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Prevention.
Control.**
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Community Infection Prevention and Control Policy for General Practice

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

Safe management of linen, including uniforms and workwear

**Version 4.00
March 2026**

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This Policy has been adopted by:

Organisation:

Signature: Name:

Job title:

Adoption date:

Review date:

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Contents **Page**

- 1. Introduction..... 4
- 2. Blinds, curtains and screens 4
- 3. Pillows and blankets 5
- 4. Staff uniforms and workwear 5
- 5. Evidence of good practice 6
- 6. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training..... 6
- 7. References 6

SAFE MANAGEMENT OF LINEN, INCLUDING UNIFORMS AND WORKWEAR

1. Introduction

NHS England states that the guidance in the *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England* should be applied by all NHS staff involved in patient care, complementing guidance for General Practice settings. This Policy has been produced in accordance with this recommendation and incorporates the *NIPCM* version as referenced in this Policy with detailed General Practice specific guidance.

This Policy is one of the 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs).

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.

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 infections, staff should refer to the latest infection prevention and control guidance.

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, and assigning the area to one of the six functional risk (FR1-6) 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 2025* for further information.

All fabric curtains and screens should be laundered by a professional laundry service. The washing process should have a disinfection section in which the load is either maintained at 65°C for no less than 18 minutes or 71°C for no less than 11 minutes. This includes the obligatory mixing time of 8 minutes to allow the temperature to fully penetrate the load and ensure disinfection is complete. Refer to the *Health Technical Memorandum 01-04: Decontamination of linen for health and social care* for further information.

A 'Curtain changing or disposal frequency for General Practice: Quick reference guide' is available to download at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/curtain-changing-or-disposal-frequency-for-general-practice/.

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 pillowcases, couch sheets and 'modesty' blankets are not recommended as it is not practical to launder them after each patient use. Disposable couch roll may 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 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.

- It is good practice to change in and out of uniform at work, or completely cover uniform when travelling to and from work.
- Always:
 - 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. Evidence of good practice

It is recommended that, for assurance purposes, 'Safe management of linen, including uniforms and workwear' is audited. This can be achieved by completing the 'SICPs Assurance: Annual IPC Audit Tool for General Practice' available to download at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/sicps-assurance-annual-ipc-audit-tool-for-general-practice/.

Following completion of the audit, an 'Action plan' should be drawn up and implemented to demonstrate continuous improvement.

6. 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 assessment 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.

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

NHS England (Updated 2025) *National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM)
for England*

NHS England (2025) *National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness 2025*

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