

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL POLICY AND PROCEDURES Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (The Trust)

IPC11

LAUNDRY MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Due to the potential number of micro-organisms that can be in soiled and fouled linen, it is important that all staff are aware of the safe management of linen.

These guidelines refer to the management of laundry items at service user level only i.e. at unit / floor / ward level and do not apply to large volume in-house laundering of soiled and fouled laundry items in dedicated laundry facilities, where more robust processes are required in accordance with current expert guidance the Health Technical Memorandum 01-04 Decontamination of linen for health and social care (DH, 2016) (HTM 01-04).

These guidelines have been written with reference to the Health Technical Memorandum 01-04 Decontamination of linen for health and social care (DH, 2016). HTM 01-04 provides expert guidance on the decontamination of linen at an organisational level whether undertaken in-house (local linen processors) or outsourced to a commercial laundry. The guidance is aimed at establishing a programme of continuous improvement in linen processing performance at all levels. Two levels of attainment are presented: Essential Quality Requirements (EQR) and Best Practice (BP). All linen processors should be capable of meeting EQR and these should be incorporated into local policy so that all staff are familiar with their requirements.

All linen processors who process infectious linen should undertake a risk analysis of their processes including the use of critical control points to ensure that linen is adequately decontaminated.

Linen to be provided and used in care should be fit for purpose and should fulfil the following requirements:

- be visibly clean
- of the right material
- not damaged or discoloured

BACKGROUND

This policy is mainly for use in in-patient areas and residential homes.

AIM

To ensure that used laundry is handled, segregated and transported in a safe manner that protects the service user, staff and visitors.

PRINCIPLES OF SAFE LAUNDRY HANDLING AND DISPOSAL

For the purposes of this document, the principles relating to the segregation and safe handling of used / infected linen are presented for staff use due to the potential number of micro-organisms in used, soiled, fouled and infected laundry.

- Where external contractors are used for reprocessing linen, their policies should be implemented to ensure correct procedures for segregation are undertaken
- Clean (unused) laundry items should be kept separate from used (soiled) items at all times
- All staff handling or processing linen must be trained to carry out the necessary procedures
- Waterproof aprons and gloves should be worn when handling used laundry and eye protection made available
- Laundry staff (reprocessing linen) should be provided with appropriate overalls or uniforms for use when processing linen in addition to the above PPE
- All staff handling or processing linen should cover skin lesions with a waterproof dressing at the beginning of the working day
- Adequate hand washing facilities must be available and conveniently located in the laundry room or immediately adjacent to same
- Protective clothing should be removed and hands washed before returning to other duties
- Smoking, eating, chewing gum and application of make-up must not be allowed in the laundry room.

COLLECTION OF LAUNDRY

Linen should be removed from a service user's bed with care, avoiding the creation of dust, and placed into an appropriate laundry bag at the bedside.

Service users' clothing should be collected in their own rooms and placed into an appropriate laundry container, individually labelled, if appropriate.

Linen must be placed immediately into the appropriate receptacle and not onto the floor or items of furniture.

Ensure that only linen is placed into the bag/container and no other inappropriate items are put into the bag/container e.g. newspapers, magazines, remote controls, etc.

Laundry should always be transported in an appropriate laundry bag/container to prevent the dispersal of skin scales into the environment and also to minimise the risk of contamination to hands and clothing from soiled articles.

Soiled laundry should be washed as soon as possible after removal. Soaking prior to washing must be avoided as the potential for cross-infection from contaminated water is high.

Linen bags should not be overfilled as this creates a manual handling risk and prevents bags from being closed prior to transportation.

Linen bags should be transported in a wheeled trolley to reduce manual handling risks

Infected linen should be placed immediately into a water-soluble bag following removal from the bed or the service user. This bag should then be placed into a plastic or polyester laundry bag.

The water-soluble bag must be tied at the neck with its own tie. The bag will be placed directly into the washing machine where it will dissolve during the laundering process.

LINEN CLASSIFICATIONS

1. USED (SOILED AND FOULED) LAUNDRY

This definition applies to all used linen, irrespective of state, which may, on occasions be contaminated by body fluids or blood. It does **not** apply to

- linen from infectious patients; and
- those suspected of being infectious;

2. INFECTIOUS LAUNDRY

This definition applies to:

- linen from patients with diarrhoea (and vomit if associated with diarrhoea);
- linen contaminated with blood or body fluids from patients with blood-borne viruses;
- other conditions as specified by local policy

3. HEAT LABILE ITEMS

This category includes fabrics damaged by normal heat disinfection processes and / or at thermal disinfection temperatures. These items should be washed at the highest temperature possible for the item which requires consideration to be given to the purchase and use of these items if there is the likelihood of contamination with infectious body fluids.

4. ITEMS CONTAMINATED WITH RADIATION

This would include linen contaminated by vomit following the ingestion of, for example radioactive iodine. Such items require disposal as radioactive waste and are not usually seen in mental health settings.

COLOUR CODING OF LINEN BAGS

Bags for used / infectious linen should be available using colour coding as required by the laundry service provider and all staff should know this colour coding system.

Standard colours include:

- white impermeable bags for used / foul linen
- red *water soluble bag* for infectious linen which should then be placed inside a red impermeable bag.
- there is no standard colour for heat labile linen bags

Receptacle	Contents	Procedures
White plastic or linen bag	Used bed linen, towels etc.	Must not include foul or infected linen. Close securely.
Water soluble bag and outer red bag	Foul and / or infected linen, infested linen.	Check for miscellaneous items. Do not overfill bag. Close securely.

Different categories of linen should not be placed inside the same outer coloured bags i.e. red water soluble bags should not be placed inside white bags that *also* contain used / foul linen.

NB Fouled linen can also be transported in red water soluble bags (as per infectious linen) but **ONLY** if the washing machine is a commercial model capable of processing infectious linen **NOT** if the linen is processed in a domestic-type machine.

Infected and / or foul laundry, soiled with blood and body fluids should be placed directly into a **water-soluble bag** immediately upon removal from the bed or the service user. This bag should then be placed into a **RED** laundry bag.

WASHING MACHINES

To comply with HTM 01-04 Best Practice, washing machines that may be used for foul or infectious linen should be of a commercial type and compliant with the EU Ecolabel wash performance rating of A (this is different to the energy rating). The machine must be subject to yearly validation of the cycle. If fouled linen is regularly processed, the machine should incorporate a sluice cycle.

THERMAL (HEAT) DISINFECTION

To ensure adequate decontamination of linen which includes destroying bacteria (and their spores) as well as viruses, fungi etc. traditionally, linen has been disinfected using heat which can easily be set and monitored. However, this is not suitable for all fabrics eg heat labile fabrics and other processes use a combination of raised temperature (but less than 65°C) and chemical disinfection – “chemo-thermal” disinfection. This guidance does not provide information on chemo-thermal disinfection.

It is best practice that used tea towels, bed linen, bath towels and flannels etc. should be washed at temperatures high enough to achieve thermal disinfection.

Infectious or fouled linen should be laundered separately from used linen and should **always** achieve thermal disinfection during the laundering process.

To achieve thermal disinfection, laundry must be held at a temperature of 65°C for at least ten minutes or at 71°C for at least three minutes, during the washing cycle. This can only be achieved in a commercial washing machine equipped with appropriate pre-wash/wash/rinse cycles.

Providing these temperatures are reached, tea towels, bed linen, clothing etc. do not need to be segregated (in the wash) as long as no gross contamination with body fluids has occurred in which case they should be treated as infectious / foul laundry.

SERVICE USERS OWN LAUNDRY

When service users own clothing and / or bed linen and towels are laundered on site by the individual service user, then it is essential that basic hygiene procedures are followed:

- Laundry facilities should be separate from all other activities wherever possible. If this is not realistic then laundry facilities should be separate from any food preparation/serving areas e.g. kitchens due to the potential for cross-contamination
- There should be adequate ventilation in the laundry room, especially if a tumble drier is being used
- Laundry room flooring must be impermeable

- Residential facilities that provide care and accommodation for small numbers of service users in a home environment can situate washing machines in the kitchen
- Service users' own clothing and bedding can be laundered at an acceptable temperature – usually 40°C as long as clothing is not soiled in which case a 60°C wash should be used particularly if a domestic washing machine has been installed. In such cases a pre-wash cycle should be used
- If regular soiling of service users' own clothing occurs then arrangements should be in place to ensure laundering in a commercial washing machine capable of thermal disinfection at 65°C or 71°C in conjunction with the use of water-soluble laundry bags. These bags will not dissolve at lower temperatures and should not be used in domestic washing machines
- Each service user's own clothing should ideally be laundered separately unless all items are individually labelled
- There must be a separate designated hand wash basin with liquid soap and disposable paper hand towels in all laundry rooms
- Foot operated pedal waste bins should be provided
- An area for ironing should be available
- Personal protective clothing should be available for all staff as appropriate
- There should be an area for safe storage of washing products, etc.
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) data sheets for all potentially hazardous substances should be readily available
- All washing machines / tumble dryers must be subject to regular planned, preventative maintenance, safety checks and validation to ensure they function safely and effectively
- There should be a written policy available for the use of the washing machines which must be followed at all times and must be displayed in the laundry room for staff/ service users to refer to.

STORAGE OF CLEAN LINEN

There should be adequate segregation of dirty and clean laundry items so that it should not be possible to re-contaminate clean laundry once processed.

There should be a separate area for ironing linen, well away from used linen, to prevent re-contamination.

Clean linen should be stored in a designated clean laundry store with a door.

Shelving must be least six inches above floor level and ideally shelving should be slatted to allow circulation of air.

The clean linen store should be kept warm at all times to discourage damp and mould.

Clean linen/clothing must not be stored in bathrooms or sluices or with other items of equipment where there is the potential for contamination. This means that linen storage areas should NOT be used for the storage of extraneous items of equipment such as mattresses, Christmas decorations, superfluous items of furniture, fans etc. but should be used exclusively for clean linen.

There should be a regular cleaning schedule in place for linen stores. A complete clean, involving removing all contents should be undertaken at least quarterly.