

Document level: Trustwide
Code: SOP23
Issue number: 4.1

Handling of Linen and Clothing

Lead executive	Director of Nursing, Therapies and Patient Partnership
Authors details	Infection Prevention and Control Service - 01244 397700

Type of document	Standard Operating Procedure
Target audience	All CWP staff
Document purpose	<p>Clothing or bed linen used by service users is a potential infection risk to those staff who are handling it on a ward or department; and during transportation to or processing in the laundry.</p> <p>The risk of acquiring infection from linen, even if it is contaminated by blood and body fluids or excreta from infected service users is low, if it is handled with gloves and sealed in an impermeable bag at source and laundered in accordance with the appropriate policy.</p>

Approving meeting	Infection Prevention and Control Sub Committee	Date 24-Oct-18
Implementation date	01-Jan-19	

CWP documents to be read in conjunction with	
HR6	Mandatory Employee Learning (MEL) policy
IC2	Hand decontamination policy and procedure
IC7	Patient isolation policy
IC3	Standard universal IPC policy
HS1	Waste management policy

Document change history	
What is different?	Recoded in line with updates to policy library
Appendices / electronic forms	N/A
What is the impact of change?	Low

Training requirements	Yes - Training requirements for this policy are in accordance with the CWP Training Needs Analysis (TNA) with Education CWP.
-----------------------	--

Document consultation	
Clinical Services	Consultation via Infection Prevention and Control Sub Committee
Corporate services	Consultation via Infection Prevention and Control Sub Committee
External agencies	Consultation via Infection Prevention and Control Sub Committee

Financial resource implications	None
---------------------------------	------

External references	
1. Department of Health (2015). The Health and Social Care Act 2008 Code of Practice on the	

- prevention and control of infections and related guidance Accessed 25.06.2018
2. Department of Health (2016) Health Technical Memorandum 01-04: Decontamination of linen for health and social care: Social care Accessed 25.06.2018
 3. National Services Scotland (2018) National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Chapter 1.7 - Management of linen: National Services Scotland. Accessed 25.06.2018

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Initial assessment	Yes/No	Comments
Does this document affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
- Race	No	
- Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)	No	
- Nationality	No	
- Gender	No	
- Culture	No	
- Religion or belief	No	
- Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people	No	
- Age	No	
- Disability - learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems	No	
Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
If you have identified potential discrimination, are there any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?		
N/A		
Is the impact of the document likely to be negative?	No	
- If so can the impact be avoided?	N/A	
- What alternatives are there to achieving the document without the impact?	N/A	
- Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?	N/A	
Where an adverse or negative impact on equality group(s) has been identified during the initial screening process a full EIA assessment should be conducted.		
If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this procedural document, please refer it to the human resource department together with any suggestions as to the action required to avoid / reduce this impact. For advice in respect of answering the above questions, please contact the human resource department.		
Was a full impact assessment required?	No	
What is the level of impact?	Low	

Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Background Information.....	4
3. Safe Management of Linen.....	4
3.1 Heat-labile items	4
3.2 Linen used during patient transfer.....	4
3.3 Used linen (sometimes referred to as soiled linen).....	5
3.4 Infectious linen.....	5
3.5 Handling used linen	5
3.6 Handling infectious linen	6
3.7 Specific items.....	6
3.8 Operational Procedure.....	6

1. Introduction

Good infection prevention is essential to ensure that people who use health and social care services receive safe and effective care. Effective prevention and control of infection must be part of everyday practice and be applied consistently by everyone (Department of Health [DoH], 2015).

The provision of clean linen is a fundamental requirement of care. Incorrect handling of processing and storage of linen can pose an infection hazard. Infection can be transferred between contaminated and uncontaminated items of linen and the environments in which they are stored. Specific hygiene measures should be taken to reduce these risks, including the correct handling of linen to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate decontamination of linen (DoH, 2016).

To ensure that a safe environment for service users, staff and relatives is maintained, it is important that used linen is appropriately segregated, bagged, stored and securely transported or laundered.

This Standard Operating Procedure applies to all inpatient services within CWP and all staff handling contaminated or potentially contaminated linen or clothing.

2. Background Information

The Department of Health (2016) Decontamination of linen for health and social care (HTM 01-04) defines linen as all reusable textile items requiring cleaning / disinfection via laundry processing including: Bed linen: blankets, counterpanes, pillowcases and sheets (woven, knitted, half sheets, draw and slide sheets); hoist slings; patient clothing and towels. Before using any linen item staff should ensure that it is fit-for-purpose, looks clean, is made of the correct material and should not be damaged or discoloured.

3. Safe Management of Linen

Clean linen should be stored in a clean, designated area, preferably an enclosed cupboard. If clean linen is not stored in a cupboard then the trolley used for storage must be designated for this purpose and completely covered with an impervious covering that is able to withstand decontamination (National Services Scotland, 2018).

3.1 Heat-labile items

This includes fabrics damaged by the normal heat disinfection process and those likely to be damaged at thermal disinfection temperatures. These fabrics should be washed at the highest temperature possible for the item; disinfection may be achieved by chemical disinfection, if required. Service-users should agree local policies regarding purchase of heat-labile items in accordance with available methods of disinfection and linen processing (National Services Scotland, 2018).

3.2 Linen used during patient transfer

Any linen used during patient transfer should be categorised at the point of destination and the categorisation of linen should be done at local level with the appropriate colour-coded bags.

3.3 Used linen (sometimes referred to as soiled linen)

This definition applies to all used linen, irrespective of state, but on occasions contaminated by body fluids or blood (DoH, 2016). Used linen that is not contaminated with bodily fluids should be segregated into clear polythene bags/baskets or linen collection bags. Linen that is contaminated with bodily fluids should be disposed of in red alginate/soluble stitch polythene bags.

3.4 Infectious linen

This applies to linen from patients with diarrhoea; linen contaminated with blood or body fluids from patients with blood-borne viruses and other conditions as specified by local policy (DoH, 2016). This linen should be disposed of in red alginate/soluble stitch polythene bags.

3.5 Handling used linen

All used linen should be handled with care and attention paid to the potential spread of infection. Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as plastic aprons and suitable gloves should be worn for handling dirty or contaminated clothing and linen. PPE should be disposed of as per the Trusts waste management policy. Hands should always be decontaminated after the removal of PPE as per the CWP Hand Decontamination Standard Operating Procedure.

When handling used linen staff should ensure that a laundry receptacle is available as close as possible to the point of use for immediate linen deposit (National Services Scotland, 2018).

Staff should ensure they do not rinse, shake or sort linen on removal from beds / trolleys or place used linen on the floor or any other surfaces. Staff should not re-handle used linen once bagged, overflow laundry receptacles or place inappropriate items in the laundry receptacle (National Services Scotland, 2018).

Linen should be removed from a service-user's bed with care and placed in an appropriate container according to the segregation category. Personal clothing should also be removed with care and placed in the bag, not placed upon the floor.

Soiled or fouled linen should not be held close to the chest to prevent contamination of the uniform (an apron should be worn).

Any segregation required prior to washing should be carried out before transport to the laundry. The responsibility for ensuring the linen is segregated lies with the staff member handling the linen at the time.

Staff should never empty bags of linen onto the floor to sort the linen into categories as this presents an unnecessary risk of infection. The linen should be transported off the ward in a suitable trolley to minimise contact with the ward staff and reduce the risk of it coming in contact with the floor.

After handling linen, hands should be washed properly (DoH, 2016) as per the [CWP Hand Decontamination Standard Operating Procedure](#).

3.6 Handling infectious linen

Infectious linen should not be sorted, but should be sealed in a red water soluble bag, which should then be placed in an impermeable bag immediately on removal from the bed or before leaving a clinical department (National Services Scotland, 2018).

3.7 Specific items

Pillows and duvets – should **NOT** be laundered as they should be wipeable and impervious to moisture which can be cleaned with detergent and water or with detergent wipes. If the item is damaged or punctured the item must be condemned, disposed of appropriately and replaced.

Service User manual handling aids – where possible, should be dedicated to individual service users. Service users with a known infection or signs of infection must be assigned their own manual handling aids. As best practice between service users and after contamination with any body fluids, manual handling aids must be sent to the laundry for thermal disinfection.

3.8 Operational Procedure

It is essential that extraneous items are not sent to the laundry with the clothing / linen. Ward staff must ensure that clothing / linen is checked and any extraneous items removed prior to bagging.

All bags must be tagged to indicate its' origin otherwise they cannot be transported to the laundry. Linen bags waiting collecting must be stored in a designated, secure area.

Service users who launder their own clothing should do so in one wash, not be mixing with other service user's clothing/linen.

A visual inspection of all laundry trolleys/skips must be carried out on at least a weekly basis by ward staff to ensure the item is clean and in a good state of repair.

No sluicing or soaking of clothing / linen should be carried out at any time.

Grossly contaminated clothing / linen must be bagged at source into a red, alginate stitched bag, it must then be laundered on sluice / thermal disinfection programme'.

All inpatient areas must have access to washing machines with a sluice / thermal disinfection programme to prevent risk of cross infection at ward/unit level. Written instructions on how to operate the washing machine must be clearly displayed adjacent to the machine.