

Hospital Linen Infection Prevention Principles

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REVIEW DATES AND DETAILS OF CHANGES MADE DURING THE REVIEW

February 2023 – Minor wording changes regarding hand hygiene

Remove need to wear gloves when handling non soiled or non-infected linen in line with Gloves off campaign

KEY WORDS

Linen

Laundry Washing

Clothes

Clothing

Curtains

Sheets

Bedding

Textiles

1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- 1.1 In accordance with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 all staff are to ensure that correct procedures are adopted in order to ensure that staff and patients are not put at risk from used and infected linen.

2 POLICY SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff working within UHL in a permanent or temporary capacity that deals with hospital linen. Hospital linen includes sheets, blankets, pillow cases, night clothing, patient gowns, staff theatre clothing and some reusable manual handling equipment

3 ROLES

3.1 Executive Lead

- 3.1.1 The executive leads for this policy are the chief nurse in their role as Director of Infection Prevention and the Director of Estates and Facilities.

3.2 All Staff who handle linen

- 3.2.1 All staff who handles linen have a duty to follow this policy. This is for the safety of all staff, patients and visitors as well as external laundry staff.

3.3 Infection Prevention Team

- 3.3.1 The Infection Prevention Team will ensure that this policy is maintained and revised according to national guidance. They will also provide advice to ward and department staff on management of used linen and appropriate storage of clean linen.

3.4 Laundry Group

- 3.4.1 The laundry Group will act as the Trust group with responsibility for issues surrounding hospital linen and linen management. The group will have representatives from facilities, the laundry provider, infection prevention and users of the service.

3.5 Facilities

- 3.5.1 Facilities are responsible for the management of the contract.
- 3.5.2 Accepting and checking the deliveries from the laundry contractor. The storage of the clean linen, in linen rooms at hospital sites, prior to delivering to the wards/departments.
- 3.5.3 Collection of the used linen from designated holding areas within wards/departments and storage prior to collection by the laundry contractor.
- 3.5.4 Carrying out duty of care and quality audits at contractor laundry production sites.

4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

4.1 General Infection Prevention Measures

- 4.1.1 Personal protective equipment must be worn depending on the situation as below
- Disposable aprons and Disposable gloves to be worn when handling used soiled and infected linen
 - Hands must be cleaned after handling used laundry,

- after removing apron/gloves.
- Hands must be cleaned before handling clean linen.

4.1.2 All linen (linen refers to all articles for laundering) will be assessed by staff on the ward and divided into one of the following categories:

- Hospital linen
- Manual handling (fabric) equipment
- Patient's own clothing

4.2 Hospital Linen

4.2.1 All communal linen/clothing must be sent to a commercial laundry where thermal disinfection can take place.

This includes:-

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| - Sheets | - Counterpanes/Duvet |
| - Blankets | - Hospital clothing |
| - Pillow cases | - Dressing Gowns |
| - Towels | - Night clothing |
| - Curtains | - Theatre Drapes |
| - Patient Gowns | - Staff Theatre Clothing |

4.3 Management of Used Linen

4.3.1 Definition: Linen, which is not from a patient in source isolation and is not visibly soiled with blood or body fluids.

- Disposable aprons must be worn to handle the linen. Gloves are not required.
- The linen must be placed directly into White polythene laundry bag. Remove apron and clean hands before proceeding to next bed.
- Bags must be securely fastened by knotting the bag to prevent spillage before leaving the ward. A plastic tie tag is not required for linen bags
- Do not over fill the laundry bag, ensure the bag is only $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
- Take the bag directly to the appropriate holding area

4.4 Management of Lightly Soiled Linen

4.4.1 Definition: Linen soiled with blood and/or body fluids.

- Disposable aprons and disposable gloves must be worn to handle the linen.
- The linen must be placed directly into a White polythene laundry bag.
- Bags must be securely fastened by knotting the bag to prevent spillage before leaving the ward. A plastic tie tag is not required for linen bags
- Do not over fill the laundry bag, ensure the bag is only $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
- Take the bag directly to the appropriate holding area.

4.5 Management of Infected and Heavily Soiled Linen

4.5.1 Definition: Linen from an inpatient in source isolation or which is heavily soiled with blood or body fluids.

- Disposable gloves and a disposable apron must be worn when handling infected linen/heavily soiled linen.
- Linen in this category must be placed into a red water-soluble bag which is securely tied using the tear off tie strip (attached to the bag). **Under no circumstances must linen be disposed of as clinical waste unless authorised by Infection Prevention (Out of hours contact the Duty Manager)**
- This must then be placed into a White polythene bag avoiding contamination of the outside of the bag, and securely fastened by knotting the bag to prevent spillage before leaving the ward. A plastic tie tag is not required for linen bags.
- When removing linen from source isolation the outer white bag must be held open by another staff member (wearing gloves and apron) outside the room or isolation area. The white bag must be securely knotted.
- Take the bag directly to the appropriate holding area; do not leave bags in side rooms with soiled linen in them.

4.6 Theatre Linen

- Used theatre linen (surgical gowns and drapes) to be placed in green bags.
- Used Scrubs to go into White bag
- All infected or heavily soiled theatre linen is to be placed into a red water-soluble bag which is securely tied using the tear off tie strip (attached to the bag), prior to placing it into a green bag which is securely knotted.
- All infected or heavily soiled scrubs to be placed in red water soluble bag which is securely tied and then placed into white bag.
- Take the bag directly to the appropriate holding area after each use.

4.7 Curtains

4.7.1 A planned programme of curtain change is in place. Curtains must however be changed sooner if visibly dirty or if directed to by the Isolation Precautions Policy (B62/2011). If curtains are changed due to infection prevention guidance they need to be bagged as infected linen.

4.8 Mops

4.8.1 All domestic services mops are changed between use or when visibly soiled and placed in a clear polythene bag, at the end of the shift. They are then taken to be laundered in an industrial washing machine which achieves validated disinfection either by thermal or chemical means e.g. Otex.

4.8.2 Ward/department Disposable mop heads must be removed after use and discarded in a clinical waste bin.

4.9 Linen Storage

4.9.1 Linen must be stored in a dedicated linen cupboard or left on the covered trolley. If linen is decanted onto smaller trolleys then it must be covered at all

times and it must be kept to a minimum amount.

4.10 Linen Used With Manual Handling Equipment

- 4.10.1 Disposable single patient use equipment must be considered for use with patients requiring source isolation and incontinent patients. If this is not available equipment must be patient allocated and laundered at commercial laundry between patients.
- 4.10.2 Equipment which is used with patients in source isolation or is contaminated with blood and/or body fluids **MUST** be sent to the commercial laundry for thermal decontamination. Items must be placed in a red soluble bag sealed with the tear off tie strip (attached to the bag) then the soluble bag is placed into a blue plastic bag with the completed return to sender card.
- 4.10.3 For patients not having source isolation precautions the equipment must ideally be patient allocated and laundered between patients.
- 4.10.4 Equipment **MUST** be identified with the ward and hospital before sending for laundering. Permanent laundry marker pens are best for this labelling (These are readily available on the Internet). Avoid using initials for the hospital. It must be written in full e.g. Leicester Royal Infirmary not LRI.
- 4.10.5 Equipment that is not used for patients in source isolation or contaminated with blood and/or body fluids must be sent to the commercial laundry. Items sent to the laundry must be placed in a blue plastic bag with the completed return to sender card.
- 4.10.6 The blue bags and return to sender docket are available from the linen room at each hospital.

4.11 Patient's Own Clothes

- 4.11.1 Patients, relatives and carers should be encouraged to launder and bring in patient clothing. The used clothing must be placed into a patient property bag to await collection.
- 4.11.2 Guidance for relatives - Dirty laundry must be washed at the highest temperature that the fabric will allow. If it is contaminated it must be washed separately from other clothes, remembering to wash hands with soap and water after handling dirty laundry.
- 4.11.3 In the event that it is impossible for relatives to launder patients clothing, the return to sender service at the commercial laundry must be considered. Clothes must be placed into a blue bag with the completed return to sender docket (**items need to be clearly listed on the docket for identification**). Blue bags and return to sender dockets are available at all hospital sites on request from the linen rooms.

4.12 Management of heavily soiled patient clothes

- 4.12.1 Permission must be sought from the patients and/or relatives to dispose of heavily soiled linen by disposing into clinical waste.
- 4.12.2 If relatives are unavailable or refuse to consent to disposal of linen consider

the use of the return to sender system at the commercial laundry. The clothes must be placed in a red water-soluble bag sealed with the tear off strip and then the soluble bag with the completed return to sender card is placed into the blue plastic bag.

4.13 Ward Based Washing Machines

4.13.1 Where washing machines are available on site, they may be used to launder patient's clothing. However, the following guidelines MUST be followed:

- a) Ward based washing machines and tumble dryers may only be purchased following approval by Infection Prevention and Facilities and must have a service contract in place. A domestic machine and tumble dryer are not suitable.
- b) Patients own clothing and hospital linen that is not included in the commercial hire contract can be laundered in a ward based washing machine using the following criteria. The Infection Prevention Team must be consulted prior commencing laundering such items.
- c) There must be dedicated space to allow for clean and dirty clothing to be segregated.
- d) There must be identified staff that are aware of the procedure for laundering clothing and laminated instructions displayed.
- e) A disposable apron must be worn when handling laundry. Hands must be cleaned after handling used laundry, after removing apron and before handling clean laundry.
- f) Clothes must be tumbled dried. A dedicated clean container must be used to transport laundry from washing machine to dryer, and to a clean area for folding and storage.
- g) The room must have dedicated cleaning hours provided by estates and facilities

4.14 Ward based washing machines and clothing from patients in source isolation/heavily soiled

4.14.1 Clothing from Patients who are in isolation or having transmission based precautions or where clothing is heavily soiled must be laundered separately from other patients clothing.

4.14.2 The clothing must be washed at the highest temperature the fabric will allow.

4.14.3 Clothing must not be placed / washed in a red alginate bag.

4.15 Ward based washing machines and clothing from patients not in source isolation

4.15.1 Clothing from patients who are not in source isolation may be washed together.

4.15.2 The clothing must be washed at the highest temperature the fabric will allow.

4.16 Rejected Linen

4.16.1 Where clean linen is found to be unusable due to staining or damage do not throw away. A reject linen bag is provided by the linen rooms on each site for returning these items to the laundry. See Appendix 1.

5. EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

5.1 General training on management of linen is included in staff induction and ongoing via e- learning infection prevention mandatory training

6. PROCESS FOR MONITORING COMPLIANCE

Element to be monitored	Lead	Tool	Frequency
Clean linen is stored in a linen cupboard or covered trolley	Lead Nurse Infection Prevention	Standard precautions Audit	Quarterly
All used linen bags are less than 2/3 full	Lead Nurse Infection Prevention	Standard precautions Audit	Quarterly
Soiled linen bags are stored in a secure cupboard/area prior to collection	Lead Nurse Infection Prevention	Standard precautions Audit	Quarterly
Return to sender items sent in wrong bags	Laundry provider	Own audit tool	Quarterly
Clinical waste items found in linen bags	Laundry provider	Own audit tool	Quarterly

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Trust recognises the diversity of the local community it serves. Our aim therefore is to provide a safe environment free from discrimination and treat all individuals fairly with dignity and appropriately according to their needs.

7.2 As part of its development, this policy and its impact on equality have been reviewed and no detriment was identified.

8. SUPPORTING REFERENCES, EVIDENCE BASE AND RELATED POLICIES

HTM 01 04 Decontamination of Linen Department of Health

UHL Cleaning and Decontamination Policy B5/2006

UHL Isolation Precautions B62/2011

9. PROCESS FOR VERSION CONTROL, DOCUMENT ARCHIVING AND REVIEW

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years unless national guidance changes in the meantime.
- 9.2 The updated version of the Policy will then be uploaded and available through INsite Documents and the Trust's externally-accessible Freedom of Information publication scheme. It will be archived through the Trusts PAGL system.

Appendix 1 Linen Bags and Their Colours



USED LINEN HIRE ITEMS
E.g. Sheets, Pillowcases, Towels, Scrubs & Nightwear etc



White Elis Bag

REJECTED LINEN



Rejected / Return Items Only
Pink Elis Bag

SURGEONS' GOWNS, THEATRE DRAPES - NO SCRUBS



Green Elis Reusable Surgical Bag

HOSPITAL OWNED ITEMS INCLUDES CURTAINS



Blue Elis Bag
Includes Curtains



INFECTED ITEMS

INFECTED HOSPITAL OWNED ITEMS INCLUDES CURTAINS



Dissolvable Red Bag Inside Blue Elis Bag

INFECTED LINEN HIRE ITEMS
E.g. Sheets, Pillowcases, Towels, Scrubs & Nightwear etc



Dissolvable Red Bag Inside White Elis Bag

INFECTED SURGEONS' GOWNS, THEATRE DRAPES - NO SCRUBS



Inner Dissolvable Red Bag
Outer Green Elis Bag