

Control of Environment

People who live, visit, and work within the home must be protected against any risks associated with infection.

Dust and dirt can allow micro-organisms to multiply and spread rapidly. Clutter and mess can prevent effective cleaning taking place.

Cleaning is an essential step in preventing and controlling the spread of infection – and a clean and tidy environment is a good indicator that the highest possible quality of care is being provided.

Cleaning and maintaining high standards of cleanliness is not just the responsibility of cleaning or housekeeping staff. All staff are responsible for a clean and tidy environment and must take steps to prevent infection.

Surfaces throughout the home should be smooth and intact with no visible cracks that can harbour bacteria. Damaged items should be considered for replacement.

Mattress covers should be waterproof to allow cleaning and checked regularly for signs of wear and tear.

Each care home should have in place a schedule to ensure the environment is clean and dust free. This will include furnishing, fittings, curtains, blinds and carpeting or vinyl flooring. This schedule should include the frequency of cleaning for each area or item, method of cleaning and cleaning solutions required to do the task. A plan must be in place for responding to spills or accidents that might quickly lead to infection control problems or accidents. This plan should be known by all staff.

A clear system for the coding of cleaning the environment within the care home is recommended. This would include colour coding for cloths, mops and buckets so they can be used in specific areas to prevent and reduce cross-contamination. For example, a particular colour of cloth and equipment may be used in a high risk area such as a bathroom whilst a different colour is used in lower risk environments such as dining areas.

All cleaning equipment for different areas must always be fit for purpose; regularly maintained; cleaned thoroughly after use and stored separately to avoid cross-contamination.

Cleaning solutions are locked away to comply with the regulations for Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH). This is part of the Health and Safety at Work legislation.

Hot water and detergent can be used for cleaning most surfaces within the care home environment. You should wear gloves (these may be heavy duty gloves so check with your local policy) and a disposable apron. A fresh solution may need to be made up for each cleaning task but again check manufacturer's instructions regarding amount to use, dilution, contact time and ensure solutions are made up freshly.

Solutions made up and stored within a receptacle must be labelled with solution name, date and time made up and expiry date.

In some circumstances other cleaning agents may need to be used – always follow manufacturer's instructions and always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Do not use antiseptics or hand hygiene agents for any cleaning task.

Remember to wash your hands after removing gloves and apron.

To break the chain of infection:

Remember:

- Always maintain a clutter free and clean environment to prevent infection
- Cleaning equipment must be clean, fit for purpose and regularly maintained
- The use of freshly made detergent solutions for each task
- Use of colour coded systems for cleaning equipment and specific areas
- Cleaning schedules should be known to all staff
- Compliance with the COSHH regulations.