



Community Infection Prevention and Control Policy for Domiciliary Care staff

Safe disposal of waste

SAFE DISPOSAL OF WASTE

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This guidance document has been adopted as a policy document by:

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Contents **Page**

1. Introduction..... 4
2. Waste streams..... 4
3. Handling waste 6
4. References 6

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1. Introduction

This Policy is 1 of the 10 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) referred to as 'Safe disposal of waste (including sharps)' by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Waste is potentially hazardous and, if not disposed of correctly, can result in injury or infection.

All staff are responsible for the safe management and disposal of waste. Where any doubt exists, advice should be sought from the local environment agency office or local authority.

Further information can be found in the *Environment and sustainability Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe management of healthcare waste*.

2. Waste streams

Examples of the waste streams that can occur in a service user's home:

- Recycling
- Household waste
- Offensive/hygiene waste
- Infectious waste
- Sharps
- Medicines

Recycling

Information on the items that can be recycled can be obtained from the service user's local authority.

Items that are recyclable which have been contaminated with food/drink/liquids, etc., e.g. bottles, cans, should be rinsed before being placed in the recycling bin.

Household waste

General domestic waste should be disposed of in the household waste stream. It should be put into a plastic bag and, if available, placed into the household waste wheelie bin.

Offensive/hygiene waste

Generally, most waste generated in domiciliary care falls under the category of offensive/hygiene waste.

This is waste such as incontinence pads and other waste produced from human hygiene, e.g. sanitary waste, stoma bags, etc., **which is non-infectious and which does not require specialist treatment or disposal**, but which may cause offence to those coming into contact with it.

Whether this type of waste can go into the normal household waste stream will depend upon the specific circumstances of each case. It will depend on issues such as:

- A risk assessment, as advised by your employer
- Whether a care professional is in attendance or not, as different legislation would come into play

For example, if the service user is **self-caring and not requiring the assistance of care workers** then offensive/hygiene waste may be suitable for the domestic waste stream, bearing in mind that only quantities less than 7 kg (approximately one bag) may be placed in the domestic waste stream. **However, if carers assist in the activities of daily living then offensive/hygiene waste should not enter the domestic waste stream.** In such cases, the waste should be placed into a yellow and black stripe offensive/hygiene waste bag and collected as arranged with the local authority.

Further advice on the classification and disposal of offensive/hygiene waste can be sought from the service user's local environment agency or local authority.

Infectious waste

Waste is classified as infectious waste where:

- The service user is known or suspected to have an infection
- Where an infection is not known or suspected, but a potential risk of infection exists

If a risk assessment identifies waste as infectious, it should be placed into an orange infectious waste bag and collected as arranged with the local authority. Further advice on the classification and disposal of infectious waste can be sought from the service user's local environment agency or local authority.

Sharps

Whoever uses the sharp is responsible for its disposal, e.g. the service user if self-injecting, or the care worker if they used the sharp on the service user. Sharps should be disposed of immediately after use into an appropriate sharps container, e.g. yellow lidded sharps container for sharps contaminated with medicines, such as insulin needle/syringes, orange lidded sharps container for sharps not contaminated with medicines, such as lancets for checking blood sugar levels.

The sharps container should be disposed of as per local arrangement, e.g. returned to the GP surgery or pharmacy. They should not be disposed of in bin bags/wheelie bins.

Further information on the safe use and disposal of sharps can be found in the 'Safe management of sharps and inoculation injuries Policy for Domiciliary Care staff'.

Medicines

Unwanted or date expired medicines should not be placed in the household waste or disposed of down the toilet or sink. Local arrangements for the disposal of unwanted/date expired medicines should be followed, e.g. return to the local pharmacy for destruction.

3. Handling waste

- When handling waste, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn.
- Waste should be correctly segregated (see section 2 Waste streams).
- All waste bags should be no more than 3/4 full and no more than 4 kg in weight. This allows enough space for the bag to be tied using a suitable plastic zip tie or secure knot.
- When handling tied waste bags, only hold the bag by the neck and keep at arms length to reduce the risk of contaminating your uniform/workwear or injury in case a sharp item has been inappropriately disposed of in the bag.
- If a waste bag awaiting collection is torn, the torn bag and contents should be placed inside a new waste bag.
- Infectious waste should be stored safely away from the public whilst awaiting collection.

Further information can be found in the *Environment and sustainability Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe management of healthcare waste*.

4. References

Department of Health (2015) *The Health and Social Act 2008: Code of Practice for the Prevention and control of healthcare associated infections*

Department of Health (2013) *Environment and sustainability Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe management of healthcare waste*

NHS England and NHS Improvement (March 2019) *Standard infection control precautions: national hand hygiene and personal protective equipment policy*