

## Hand hygiene: information to support improvement

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## Introduction and purpose of this document

This document:

- explains the importance of hand hygiene as part of (a) infection prevention and control, (b) the health and wellbeing of people using a care service and (c) the health and safety of staff and visitors
- tells you about the regulations, National Care Standards and guidance used by the Care Inspectorate in relation to hand hygiene
- provides some useful links, references and information which will help service providers develop or update both their hand hygiene procedures and their quality assurance approach
- helps service providers, people commissioning services, people using a care service and their family or friends, other organisations and the general public to understand what provision and practices for hand hygiene are expected within the care setting
- provides advice arising from Care Inspectorate inspections and complaint investigations

Good hand hygiene practices for everyone using, visiting or working in care services can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of people using those services, and the health and safety of staff. The phrase 'hand hygiene' covers all aspects of hand cleansing, such as using soap and water, hand wipes, hand sanitisers and alcohol based hand rubs.

## Background

Hand hygiene is widely acknowledged as the most effective way of preventing and controlling avoidable infections, but must be carried out at appropriate times, using the correct facilities, suitable products and the correct procedure. As well as preventing infection, hand washing is an important part of healthy living for everyone and can be comforting for older people and fun for children.

Some comments from older people about hand washing are in **A Review of Cleanliness, Hygiene and Infection Control in Care Homes for Older People**, published in 2005 by the (former) Care Commission. Many commented on how important it was to them that staff washed their hands between different duties and offered them the opportunity and time to wash their hands after using the toilet or before eating.

Notifications of infections reported to the Care Inspectorate highlight that the most common infections in care homes for adults (particularly those for older people) and

from nursery settings are gastrointestinal in origin. The cause of the infection is often not identified, but is often thought to be norovirus.

It is important to stress that alcohol based hand rubs are not suitable for use in the management of suspected gastrointestinal illnesses because they are not effective against bugs such as norovirus, *E.coli* O157 or *Clostridium difficile*. This is made clear in the norovirus guidance for care homes (e.g. General information and infection prevention and control precautions to prepare for and manage norovirus in care homes 2011 Health Protection Scotland) available on:

[www.hps.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk)

<http://www.documents.hps.scot.nhs.uk/hai/infection-control/norovirus/norovirus-guidance-carehomes-2011-09.pdf>

This guidance is currently being updated and will be available in 2015.

The routine use of alcohol based hand rub products and sanitisers in place of hand washing is not recommended in care services. Use of these products would be specified by the local Health Protection Team.

Published reports on outbreaks of *E.coli* O157 and outbreaks of salmonella in care homes have noted failings in correct hand washing procedures, including the lack of appropriate facilities.

## Hand washing

All services regulated by the Care Inspectorate must have a hand hygiene policy/procedure/information in order to comply with the Scottish Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, SSI 210, 4. (1) (a) and (d) and also aspects of the National Care Standards appropriate to the service type.

Hand hygiene in daycare of children's services will be specifically examined during Care Inspectorate inspections from 1 April 2014. For all other services, hand hygiene will be examined in all quality themes at some period in time.

Correct methods for hand washing, facilities and products plus the need for policies and procedures are described in the following documents:

### **Infection Control in Adult Care Homes: Final Standards, (2005) and the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (2014).**

This Scottish Executive Final Standards document remains current and emphasises the need for services to have a hand hygiene policy/procedure and information, including posters appropriate to the service provided and client group.

The standard within the document relating to hand hygiene has been superseded by elements of the hand hygiene section (i.e. Pages 9-11 and Appendices 1 and 2) contained within the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual from Health Protection Scotland (2014) as appropriate to the type of service user and environment. It is available here:

<http://www.documents.hps.scot.nhs.uk/hai/infection-control/ic-manual/ipcm-p-v2-3.pdf>

### **Preventing Infection in Care, 2011**

This educational resource, available as a DVD programme and including a supporting CD rom, with resource files, a workbook and other supporting materials, was produced by NHS Education for Scotland and Care Inspectorate. This resource provides information and demonstrations of hand washing procedures. Available from NHS Education for Scotland on request, and an online version is available here: <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-theme-initiative/healthcare-associated-infections/training-resources/preventing-infection-in-care.aspx>

### **Preventing Infection in Care at Home, 2013**

This toolkit resource for care at home and community health staff was developed by NHS Education for Scotland in collaboration with Care Inspectorate, Health Protection Scotland and Scottish Care. It comprises an app for android and iphone technology and also a pocket book guide based on Standard Infection Control Precautions including hand hygiene. The app and the pocket book guide provide short, concise advice written and pictorial. The app can be found by searching in the Apple and Google stores using PIIC@H or preventing infection and a downloadable pocket book guide can be found at <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-theme-initiative/healthcare-associated-infections/training-resources/preventing-infection-in-care-@-home.aspx>

Hard copy pocket book guides can be requested from NES by emailing requirements to [hai@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:hai@nes.scot.nhs.uk)

### **Germs – wash your hands of them, 2012**

The Food Standards Agency has developed a hand-washing DVD, which demonstrates an effective way to wash hands and eliminate potentially harmful bacteria. This DVD clip shows contamination, bad techniques and effective techniques. This shows how staff should wash their hands and the need for removal of jewellery/rings. It is particularly useful for staff working in settings other than care homes. Available from: [www.food.gov.uk/scotland/news-updates/news/2012/nov/germs\\_handwashing](http://www.food.gov.uk/scotland/news-updates/news/2012/nov/germs_handwashing)

### **Germs. Wash your hands of them - Scotland's National Hand Hygiene Campaign**

This pack provides animation, posters, stickers and all sorts of materials to promote hand washing of children in the 3 – 6 year age group. There are handwashing materials for others groups but the guidance for healthcare workers may not be appropriate for use in social care, for example, the suggestion that health staff should wash their hands before every contact with patients is not recommended in social care unless infection is suspected or known. Available from:

<http://washyourhandsofthem.com/children's-pack.aspx>

### **Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings), 2011**

This document from Health Protection Scotland is currently being updated and the new version may be available during 2014. The current document contains a section

on hand hygiene stressing why it is important for children to understand the need for hand washing, good hand washing practice including a diagram in the appendices and when to wash hands. Available from:

<http://www.documents.hps.scot.nhs.uk/hai/infection-control/guidelines/infection-prevention-control-childcare.pdf>

**Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions. Industry Code of Practice, 2012**

This document supports the need for hand washing after contact with animals and the animal's equipment, bedding, toys, food or water in all care settings. It clearly states that hand gels, sanitisers and wipes are not appropriate as an alternative to hand washing under running water.

**Outbreak of E. coli O157 infection at Rose Lodge Nursery, Aboyne May 2012. Report of the Incident Management Team.**

This report highlights the need for nappy changing and hand washing facilities and practices to be in place. It demonstrates the consequences of poor practice and facilities.

**Building Better Care Homes for Adults, 2014**

This document provides useful information that reflects best practice for wash hand sinks used by staff and can be used by the majority of registered care services. Whilst primarily aimed at care homes for adults, it may be of use for large childminding services. Available from:

[http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/176796/building\\_better\\_care\\_homes-040414.pdf](http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/176796/building_better_care_homes-040414.pdf)

**Scottish Health Facilities Note 30 (Version 3). Infection Control in the Built Environment – Design and Planning, 2007**

An updated version of this document is due to be released in 2014. It contains information relating to types of sinks and associated equipment which reflect the key principles which can help prevent infection. Available from:

<http://www.nric.org.uk/IntegratedCRD.nsf/f0dd6212a5876e448025755c003f5d33/2f0e3fafe2bc6d3b8025774c00440772>

**Nappy changing facilities in early years, nurseries and large childminding services: requirements for service providers applying for registration or variation of an existing service, 2014**

This provides information on hand wash sinks and can be used as a model for existing services moving towards improvements in their own premises. Available from:

<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/search/?s=nappy+changing>

## Key points identified from best practice documents cited above and advice from regulatory activities regarding hand washing

- Hand wash sinks should only be used for hand washing and not the cleaning of other items. Sinks must be large enough to avoid water being spilled or sprayed outwith the sink. Past inspections have found hand washing sinks used for cleaning of potties, washing of contaminated clothes, or storage of items and other unsuitable uses.
- Hand wash sinks should be available in areas such as service user rooms, kitchen, dirty utility (sluice area), treatment rooms, nappy changing and personal care rooms, toilets including those used by staff, and playrooms. This is to prevent staff having to leave rooms to reach hand wash sinks, and opening and closing doors with potentially contaminated hands in the process. When hand wash sinks are not readily available, staff and children tend to forget to wash their hands when the need arises.
- Hot and cold running water must be available. If mobile hand wash sinks are in use, it is acceptable that only warm or hot water is provided. In outdoor situations warm water should be used whenever possible. Large volumes of water are not required for hand washing as water is only required to wet the hands prior to adding soap and to rinse the soap off again. Often, soap is not used correctly because it is immediately washed off before the cleaning process is started, especially with children. Services which do not provide warm or hot water due to fear of scalding children and older people should change practice. The HSE provides advice:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/scalding-burning.htm>
- In children's daycare settings, the hand wash sinks and taps used by children must reflect their needs. (Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings Section 5.1))  
<http://www.documents.hps.scot.nhs.uk/hai/infection-control/guidelines/infection-prevention-control-childcare.pdf>
- Non hand operated taps should be used, such as lever, elbow, automatic, paddle or push-top taps. Poor practice in managing taps often undoes the value of hand washing, if children are unsupervised.
- Hand wash sinks should be of an appropriate height for children, those with disabilities, people using a care service, and staff. Depending on the age of the child, an adult height wash hand sink can be used by a child using a step. Lack of adult-height sinks may lead to difficulties with staff back health.
- Antibacterial liquid or foam soap should not be used unless otherwise instructed by the NHS Health Protection Team during an outbreak of infection, or unless specified for a particular person for a defined period of time, or as advised by Environmental Health in relation to food hygiene requirements. Soap dispensers must be at a height suitable for those using them. Free

standing single-use dispensers often fall into the sink when used by children and older people and can be difficult to operate.

- Disposable paper towels or kitchen towels in appropriate dispenser should be used to dry hands. If electric hand driers are used, care must be taken to ensure hands are thoroughly dried. Alternatively, flannels or small hand towels can be used but must be provided clean prior to use and sent for laundering after a single-use by one person. This is to prevent cross-contamination through storage of used towels or use by more than one person, some of whom may be developing an infection as yet unknown. Open storage of paper towels often leads to excessive waste, or they can fall onto the floor and are put back for use. Use of paper roll for hand drying is often difficult for children who cannot manage to rip off an appropriate piece.
- Waste bins for disposal of used paper towels should be lined with a liner/disposable bag following a risk assessment for suitability of liner depending on type of service user, for example young children who are unsupervised or adults who may be confused. Waste bins used exclusively for staff should have a foot-operated or automatic lid to prevent hand contamination. Children and adults should have a bin which is easy to use and does not compromise their safety. This can be an open bin if it is used only for the disposal of used paper towels following hand washing. It is common to see service users opening the lid of the bin with their hands rather than using a pedal.
- Within a person's own room and en-suite facilities in a care service, the hand sink, taps, soap, towels and bins must reflect the needs of the resident. Staff can adapt their practice regarding the sink and taps. Suitable liquid or foam soap and disposable paper towels should be made available to them.
- The use of wipes or wet cloths to clean adults' and children's faces after meals, craft work, painting or other activities is acceptable for the physical removal of mess. Wipes are not an effective method of decontamination after activities such as after using a toilet/commode or potty, nappy or pad changing, before handling food, eating or baking, after outdoor activities for example gardening, or contact with pets. Always remember to dry hands and faces after cleaning.
- Paper towels should be available in all communal, staff and visitors' toilets.
- Use of a communal basin for washing hands is never acceptable from an infection prevention and control perspective. All hand wash facilities and products must be appropriate for use, clean, not damaged and easy to use.

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