

CLEANLINESS IN CARE HOMES

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THE REGULATIONS

12.—(1) The registered person must, so far as reasonably practicable, ensure that—

a) service users;

b) persons employed for the purpose of the carrying on of the regulated activity; and

(c) others who may be at risk of exposure to a health care associated infection arising from the carrying on of the regulated activity,

are protected against identifiable risks of acquiring such an infection by the means specified in paragraph (2).

THE REGULATIONS

(2) The means referred to in paragraph (1) include:

- (c) the maintenance of appropriate standards of cleanliness and hygiene in relation to—
 - (i) premises occupied for the purpose of carrying on the regulated activity,
 - (ii) equipment and reusable medical devices used for the purpose of carrying on the regulated activity, and
 - (iii) materials to be used in the treatment of service users where such materials are at risk of being contaminated with a health care associated infection.

CLEANLINESS IN CARE HOMES

Achieving and maintaining high standards of cleanliness in care homes is important for three reasons:-

because it is what residents and their families expect and deserve;

because it contributes to ensuring a safe environment for care; and

because it is a mandatory requirement under the Health and Social Care Act which states:-

CARE HOMES

Care homes face particular issues, because in addition to providing premises which are clean and safe, they need to also provide an environment which is 'homely', and where users may even undertake some cleaning themselves. It is therefore important to ensure that a 'proportional' approach is taken to meeting the regulatory requirements.

DEVISING A SYSTEM

So, what might a system ‘designed to assess the risk of’ infection and to ‘maintain appropriate standards of cleanliness and hygiene’ look like in relation to cleaning services?

CLEANING SPECIFICATION

The National Patient Safety Agency, working with the Department of Health, Care Quality Commission, National Care Homes Forum and Anchor Trust has produced a cleaning specification to assist care home providers in identifying such a 'system'

THE SPECIFICATIONS ARE...

A process which will allow providers to demonstrate how they ensure that the premises in which they deliver care are clean and safe, and where the risks which may be posed to service users, staff and others by infections have been assessed and – where necessary – addressed.

THE SPECIFICATIONS ARE NOT....

Mandatory

The only way of demonstrating how premises are kept clean and safe

HOW DO THEY WORK?

The Specifications adopt a 6 stage approach consisting of:-

Cleaning Plan

Risk assessment

Standard setting

Frequency identification

Cleaning responsibility

Audit

CLEANING PLAN

Providers are recommended to produce a short document covering issues such as how their cleaning services are organised and resourced and how training is provided. This will act as evidence to the CQC that there are systems in place

An example is provided in the Specifications.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A key element of the process is identifying what infection risks the premises pose and how cleaning can contribute to addressing or reducing those risks.

The first stage should be to allocate each area of the premises a risk category of High, Medium or Low. This should be based on the kind of activity undertaken in the area and any attendant infection risk. This will then feed through to a later stage in the process.

CLEANING STANDARDS

Providers need to determine what standard of cleanliness they require for all the items they have which require cleaning.

This may be a generic standard (eg all items should be free of dirt, smears, stains) or it may be more specific to the item in question.

CLEANING FREQUENCIES

Once decisions have been reached on the risk category of each area, and the standard of cleanliness required, decisions will need to be made about how often cleaning needs to happen in order to consistently achieve the required standard taking into consideration the area being cleaned.

CLEANING RESPONSIBILITY

Evidence from elsewhere suggests that it is crucial that there be no ambiguity about whose responsibility it is to clean areas/items.

Providers are therefore recommended to ensure that there is a clear framework setting out cleaning responsibility for everything which needs to be cleaned

AUDIT

A key component of any system is having arrangements in place to assess the effectiveness of the cleaning service.

The specifications therefore include a simple auditing process based on a Pass/Fail test which allows a judgement to be reached on the effectiveness of cleaning, and to identify any shortfalls

A FEW QUESTIONS

What is the CQC's view on the Specifications?

-the CQC are content that the process set out in the specifications would, if followed, provide suitable evidence of having a system in place. They will, however, accept other means, and of course having a 'system' is only one requirement – ultimately the judgement will be based on whether premises are actually 'clean and safe'

A FEW QUESTIONS

Do we have to follow them?

- no – as previously mentioned they are not mandatory and anyone is free to devise their own system to provide the required evidence.

A FEW QUESTIONS

How much will they cost to implement?

- inevitably there will be a small cost in staff time to go through the process and put the system in place, though this is unlikely to be significant.
- if the process identifies that additional cleaning resources are needed, this is not be a function of the specifications, rather a recognition that existing cleaning resources are not adequate

A FEW QUESTIONS

When will they be available?

- it is not possible at the time to give an exact date, but it is hoped they will be on the NPSA's website soon. The NPSA will work with bodies such as the Care Homes Forum and Anchor to devise appropriate ways of publicising this when decided.

IN SUMMARY

The National Specifications for Cleanliness are designed to help providers to meet the requirements of the CQC in relation to providing a clean and safe environment for the delivery of care. They are not meant to be onerous, and they take account of the need to take a proportional approach to this area of healthcare delivery

OTHER RESOURCES

The NPSA has a document entitled the Healthcare Cleaning Manual. Although primarily aimed at the hospital sector, much of what it includes can be applied to other healthcare environments and care home providers may find it a helpful source of advice and guidance.

Available from <http://www.nrls.npsa.nhs.uk/resources/patient-safety-topics/environment/?entryid45=61830>

OTHER RESOURCES

You may also wish to encourage an appropriate member of staff to consider joining a professional organisation such as the Association of Healthcare Cleaning Professionals who have a wealth of experience and advice to offer as well as providing an invaluable network. The AHCP has a stand here today so you may wish to talk to them