

A solid green horizontal bar.

**PROTECTING YOU AND
YOUR SERVICE USER**



Providing Care Residents with great care is the goal and challenge of every care home in the sector.

Whether it's supported living, dementia care or even supporting people with learning disabilities, making sure service users have everything they need so they can live a fulfilled and happy life is what everyone in the care sector strives for.

Achieving that goal is another matter entirely.

One of the biggest challenges is keeping service users safe and well in an environment designed to keep them comfortable and 'at home'.

Hospitals, on the other hand are designed and built to prevent and contain infections with materials that resist bacteria, fungus and microbes.

Each section of a hospital from its corridors to its wards is designed to act as containment for the spread of infection from one part of the hospital to another.

Coupled with a robust infection control strategy and they are, by nature a multi-lined defence against the spread of infection.

The care setting doesn't always have the same level of protection because the objectives are different. Hospitals want to make you well; care homes generally want to make you comfortable. This is by no means a bad thing but it does make keeping service users and staff safe from infectious disease a real challenge.

So what can you do when everything in the environment is unwittingly designed to thwart your efforts to contain any potential outbreak?

1. *Have a Robust and Fully Tested Infection Control Strategy*

Start with the basics.

Responding to outbreaks or potential outbreaks as they arrive simply doesn't work. Reactive, tactical processes aren't the same as having a defined approach.

Having an infection control strategy ([link to blog](#)) gives you a series of tactical responses that work in harmony so outbreaks are not only contained but actually reduced too.

Part of this strategy should be making sure that everyone from your newest recruit to your more experienced support worker knows what the infection control strategy is.


Regularly assess the strategy and review it every time there's an outbreak. This document should never be 'finished' but be constantly evolving and improving to make sure that both staff and service users aren't unnecessarily put at risk.

The national average in the UK is 10 instances of sickness for care workers so anything you can do to reduce this number represents a genuine investment and potential cost saving.

2. *Protect fabrics and materials.*

Where possible make sure furniture is treated to prevent (or severely hinder) absorption of fluids.

In the event of a service user having an accident, a chair or bed can become an incubator for a host of highly infectious diseases and anyone sitting or sleeping on that furniture afterwards is being exposed to extreme risk. Where possible use mattress protectors and other covers on your furniture to limit any infectious material to a containable (and if necessary disposable) item that can be safely handled.



3. Disinfect

Because you're dealing with fabrics rather than the kind of wipe clean materials you find in hospitals, disinfecting furniture isn't as simple as a wipe down.

Steam cleaning soiled furniture kills any harmful microbes that may have survived the initial cleaning efforts.

Make sure this is done in a designated area, away from staff and service users, preferably outside and near to a drain or soil pipe to wash the residue away.

Also make sure you observe enhanced infection control procedures, ensuring your eyes, nose mouth and hands are fully covered. Also make sure any open wounds are dressed and water-proofed.

4. Understand

Displaying compassion for your service users when they need your support is really important. The worst outbreaks are caused when the severity of the problem is kept hidden from clinicians.

Showing your service users compassion when they need help encourages them to come forward and support other service users by discretely getting your attention in the event of an embarrassing moment.

You never want to be in a situation where other service users have been put at risk because someone felt too embarrassed to speak up.

5. Sluice/Dirty Utility Room

Processes and strategies need to be underpinned by an infrastructure that supports the desired outcomes.

A properly designed sluice room with the means to safely dispose of consumables, human waste and the means to clean or disinfect potentially soiled items is vital to infection control.

It gives you a place to take potentially infected items to clean them thoroughly and safely. It also helps to protect the dignity of the service users as it is a separate space, away from the residents.

A sluice/dirty utility room also gives you the means of cleaning or disposing of bedpans, containers and urinal bottles.

This further protects staff, reducing risk to them and therefore risk to the service users.

For more information on how we can support your infection control strategy through sluice/dirty utility room design, machinery and consumables, contact us today and one of our solution experts can help.

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