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WHAT IS A SLUICE ROOM?



When we consider the question of ‘what is a sluice room’, the first response should be ‘very important indeed!’ But what exactly does a sluice room do, and why is it so critical?

The sluice room is a closed area found in hospitals, care homes and special needs schools; it may also be present in other extended care facilities, too.

When properly planned and equipped, the sluice room allows for the safe and efficient disposal of human waste. In turn, the spread of infection is prevented.

A sluice room can also be called a [‘dirty’ or ‘soiled’ utility room](#). No matter how a medical facility chooses to name it, the function is much the same – and of great significance to clinical operations.

What happens in a sluice room?

When a clinician enters a sluice room, they will most likely be handling some kind of enclosed human waste after providing care to a patient or resident who may either be bedridden, can’t safely use a traditional toilet, or have special needs which leave them incontinent.

This waste will need to be hygienically disposed of in a way that won’t expose clinicians to harmful bacteria or spread it around the area. Similarly, the vessel holding the waste will need to be cleaned if it is reusable, so it’s sanitary for the next user.

If the vessel isn’t reusable, it’ll most likely be made of medical pulp, and need to be safely discarded. The same will apply to single-use incontinence products, such as pads and nappies.

None of these items can be thrown into a regular bin, as they pose a serious risk to human health.

Why are sluice room activities so important?

It’s vital for sluice room operations to be well-planned and orchestrated, so that the working environment (and as a consequence, the entire medical facility) remains safe.

If the sluice room is badly designed, with poor equipment and insufficient procedures, disposing of human waste can be [slow and inefficient](#). In turn, clinicians can risk spreading dangerous pathogens (inside and outside of the sluice room), as well as spending too long dealing with auxiliary tasks.

If bacteria are allowed to spore, it could result in a major outbreak of infection in your facility. Illnesses such as *C. difficile* are extremely distressing for patients and can even be life-threatening; the pressure on clinicians during outbreaks is also significant, with a major extra demand on their already limited time. The extra cost to your facility, in terms of deep cleaning, extra staff and ward closures can be devastating – and that’s before the damage to your reputation is considered.

It’s in everyone’s best interest, therefore, that excellent sluice room practices are properly considered, supported and upheld.



How do sluice rooms control infection?

A sluice room contributes to good infection control, straight from the design stages; it should have a clear workflow, where clinicians can easily travel from one workstation to the next, without spreading germs.

Care should also be taken to provide crevice-free worksurfaces, so bacteria can't hide; using [stainless steel furniture](#) is an effective way for this to be achieved. Similarly, walls should be easy to wipe clean, and floors simple to mop, with no cracks or indents.

Alongside the architecture of a sluice room, the equipment it contains is critical to controlling infection. The correct equipment should be provided for each task, to suit the kind of care that your facility is providing to service users.

If your facility relies on re-usable bedpans, having a bedpan washer disinfectant in the sluice room is absolutely vital.

Far safer than washing bedpans by hand, [a washer disinfectant will sanitise multiple utensils at a time](#), and far quicker than a clinician could achieve manually. It's also a more effective method, which ensures the chamber and its contents are heated to the correct temperature to kill bacteria.

For facilities which favour single-use pulp products, [a macerator will provide sanitary disposal of soiled bedpans](#), urinals and commode pots.

Cutting pulp into a fine paste, macerators flush their contents through the normal sewerage system. A disinfectant rinse after the process ensures the macerator itself remains sanitary, as well as smelling fresh.

Both processes are far more hygienic than attempting to clean a bedpan with running water, gloves and scrubbing tools; even with the best intentions, these can spread bacteria through splashback, steam or human error.

If your facility needs to regularly dispose of incontinence pads and nappies, [a macerator designed specifically for incontinence products](#) will provide the same service. Soiled items are safely disposed of, without the clinician needing to be hands-on and spreading bacteria in the process.

DDC Dolphin can help you to ensure that your sluice room is fulfilling its infection control obligations, from every angle.

With over 25 years of experience, DDC Dolphin are sluice room experts, offering an all-encompassing solution to ensure that your human waste disposal requirements are met.

From ensuring that newly built facilities are sufficiently planned, to equipping your sluice room with the most suitable technology, DDC Dolphin can advise you every step of the way.

Once your sluice room is installed, DDC Dolphin will continue to support you. Offering [comprehensive service and maintenance packages](#), maximum uptime is guaranteed; preventable issues can be stemmed, while the unexpected can be dealt with quickly and efficiently, with minimum impact on your clinicians and service users.

DDC Dolphin can even provide training to your staff, so everyone can maximise the use of critical sluice room machinery and prevent breakdowns by misuse.



The result?

A safe environment for those in your care, where service users thrive, and clinicians can work to the best of their ability.

Keen to find out more? [Contact DDC Dolphin today.](#)

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