

# DOMESTIC SERVICES SAFE WORKING PRACTICES GUIDELINES

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## **1. ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING**

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All DRH premises must be cleaned to the highest possible standards.

A clear component of providing consistently high quality cleaning is the presence of a clear plan, which will set out all aspects of the cleaning service.

All cleaning rota's must be strictly adhered to, and monitored by the Manager.

The plan must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved, from managers through to care staff and domestic staff

## **2. USE OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT**

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Check electrical equipment before use for frayed cords, breaks and defective plugs.

Ensure switches are in the "off" position before connecting plugs to outlets.

In the case of overheating, sparking or smoking motors turn off the power supply and report the defect to your manager / shift leader. Ensure the equipment is labeled, identifying the fault, and remove it from use. Under no circumstances should the equipment be used again until checked and repaired by a competent person.

When disconnecting a plug from an outlet pull firmly on the plug, not on the lead.

Do not use electrical equipment or activate electrical circuits with wet hands.

Do not attempt to repair defective wiring or other electrical equipment parts; report any defective equipment to your manager or shift leader.

Never attempt to remove any part of a machine such as a brush or pad-drive while the machine is connected to the power supply. Switch off at the mains and remove the plug from the socket first.

Plug into the nearest socket in the area in which you are working, thereby minimizing the possibility of an accident by other persons tripping over the trailing cable. Never leave machines unattended and connected to the power supply. Switch off, remove the plug and move the machine to a position well away from the circulation area.

**Never overload electrical sockets by the use of adapters.**

Change the power point before the cable is fully stretched to avoid wrenching wires from the plug. Whenever it is possible to do so, it is advisable to work backwards towards the power point.

## **3. WET FLOORS**

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Accidents can be caused to service users, visitors or staff by falls due to wet or greasy floors. To reduce the risk of this type of accident use as little water as possible when mopping, scrubbing or stripping floors, and display warning signs. If possible, dry access to the area should always be left for staff and visitors, for instance, when scrubbing a corridor scrub one half first leaving the other half as a dry passage.

Consideration should be given to cleaning/mopping of floors, especially in communal areas, outside busy times or perhaps when service users are in bed.

## **4. WET CLEANING EQUIPMENT**

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All wet cleaning equipment, hot water extraction machines and wet suction cleaners must be cleaned after use and stored dry as they may otherwise provide a breeding ground for bacteria, which multiply rapidly in the ideal conditions they have found. Mops should be thoroughly washed, squeezed dry and stored head uppermost. Every attempt should be made to ensure that mop heads are left or allowed to dry as quickly as possible. The appropriate colour-coding of cleaning equipment must be used for the area they are designated.

The aim of colour coding is to prevent cross contamination.

It is vital that training the colour coding system, forms part of the induction training or continuous training program

- Red- Sanitary appliances and washroom floors
- Blue - General use
- Yellow - Washroom rooms
- Green - Kitchens
- White - Isolation Rooms

## **5. DRY SUCTION CLEANING**

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Well designed vacuum cleaners should reduce the bacterial contamination on smooth floors by at least 95%. To achieve this level of efficiency, the dust bags must be changed at least once a week and more frequently in more used areas. The machines must also be kept scrupulously clean, including the brushes and instruments used in the vacuuming process.

## **6. CROSS INFECTION**

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Service users are on occasions in a physical condition which seriously impairs their resistance to disease. This makes them very much more susceptible to germs. A high standard of cleaning is vitally important in reducing the likelihood of cross-infection. Please refer to the Control of Infection Policy for further information.

## **7. DISINFECTANTS**

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All disinfectants are poisonous and must, therefore, be stored in a safe place, preferably under lock and key. Their use should be controlled by ensuring COSHH assessments have been completed, together with a safe working practice for each product. All cleaning chemicals should be returned to the locked COSHH/storage cupboard after use.

## **8. CLEANING MATERIALS**

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Many cleaning materials in use contain chemicals which are potentially dangerous if not used correctly. These must therefore be used strictly in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Your COSHH information file should be checked for information before using unfamiliar products, identifying any precautionary measures that may include the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

All cleaning materials used should be kept in the original containers which are labeled correctly. Any chemicals not labeled correctly should be reported to the Home Manager immediately, and removed from use. Where very strong cleaning materials are used, it is

advisable to wear protective gloves at all times to prevent burns or irritation to the skin. Special care must be taken at all times to prevent any chemicals coming into contact with the eyes.

All staff must read the COSHH file to identify safe systems of work and storage of cleaning chemicals. The file, where appropriate will also identify which PPE should be used, along with any first aid treatment that may be necessary should an accident occur.

## **9. KITCHENS/FOOD HANDLING**

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Cleanliness in kitchens is essential to prevent the spread of potentially harmful bacteria.

Crockery and cutlery should be washed thoroughly in hot water and rinsed to allow to air dry where possible. If suitable racks are not available, dry with paper toweling or with a clean, fresh tea towel. Where automatic dishwashers are installed they should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Any faults with this equipment should be reported to your Home Manager.

Chipped and broken crockery is potentially a cross infection hazard and should be withdrawn from use.

Never leave kettles or pots containing boiling liquids near edges where they can easily be knocked over.

Saucepan handles should always point inwards but never left over heated rings/plates.

Do not clean ovens or hot plates whilst they are switched on and before they cool down. Goggles should be worn along with gloves when cleaning ovens with strong chemicals, to avoid splashes to the eyes, and absorption. Adequate ventilation must also be assured when using strong chemicals.

When operating water boilers, take care to keep hands well away from taps and jets.

To avoid the risk of scalding, kettles should never be over filled. Consideration should be given to filling the kettle through the spout.

Protect your hands when removing containers from ovens, hot places and heated food trays.

All disposable cloths should be disposed of daily or after each meal. All tea towels should be changed at least daily or as soon as they become too wet to use.

All staff handling food should hold the basic Food Hygiene Certificate of the Institute of Environmental Health Officers. In and follow safe handling procedures to ensure that there is the least possible risk of food poisoning or cross infection from food routines. Training must be updated every 3 years.

## **10. HEALTH & HYGIENE IN FOOD PREPARATION AREAS**

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Hands should be washed frequently and especially when entering a food preparation area, before and after handling food, disposing of rubbish, and after using toilet facilities.

Long hair should be tied back / covered up where appropriate.

Jewellery should be removed.

Appropriate footwear must be worn at all times, open-top shoes or sandals should not be worn. Appropriate footwear will help reduce the risk of injury to feet through spilled liquid and falling equipment.

Protective clothing should be worn when preparing food. The clothing should be changed as often as necessary to reduce the risk of spreading infection.

Cuts and abrasions should be covered – when involved in food preparation blue plasters from the first aid box should be used.

## **11. HIGH LEVEL WORK**

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Staff members that are required to work at a level beyond your reach, for example hanging curtains, must follow the safe working practice identified by the risk assessment, for working at height. Only use properly designated safety steps, a second member of staff must steady the steps at the bottom. Activities involving the use of step ladders should be carried out when service users are not in the vicinity.

## **12. LIFTING AND CARRYING**

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Always avoid bending, stooping or twisting, but especially when supporting any weight. Appropriate lifting and handling techniques can make manual handling activities relatively safe. Since the strongest muscles in the body are in the legs, followed by the arms, these sets of muscles should be used as much as possible for all lifting and carrying operations, and the back muscles as little as possible.

To lift an object from a low position, stand as close to the object as possible, with your feet shoulder width apart, sink down, bending at the knees as far as is comfortable. After testing the weight of the object, if it is safe, raise the head to help maintain the natural curvature of the spine. The move must be powered by the leg muscles, not the back. Hold the object close to your center of gravity.

Always use your leg and arm muscles as much as possible, never your back muscles, when pushing/pulling or performing any manual handling task.

Never attempt to lift objects that are too heavy for you – always ask for assistance and, if lifting equipment is provided, use it.

Do not provide assistance to delivery men asking for help with delivering a heavy object that you would not normally be expected to lift.

All staff members are required to attend manual handling training annually.

Please see the Manual Handling Guidelines and in-house risk assessments for further information.

## **13. PESTS**

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Always report the presence of pests to the Home Manager.

## **14. SMOKING**

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Staff members are not permitted to smoke inside any DRH building.

## **15. FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

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Fires can be caused by:

- Electrical faults, such as faulty sockets or electrical appliances, the overloading of a socket or the use of a machine with a defective flex or plug
- The natural combustion of refuse not properly disposed of
- Gas burners and naked flames, especially in kitchens
- Cigarette ends and matches
- Tumble drying / interruption of the cool cycle

A tumble dryer should not be overloaded; the filters must be checked / cleaned regularly to ensure they are not blocked. Blocked filters and incorrect cycle times are a contributory factor to tumble dryer fires. Staff must ensure that the manufacturer's instructions are followed at all times.

Please see the Fire Precautions Procedure, in-house risk assessment and evacuation plan for further information.

## **16. HAZARD REPORTING**

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It is the duty of all staff to report any defects that could cause an accident, e.g.: frayed carpets, loose tiles, overheating cables, etc.

## **17. IN CONCLUSION**

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The standard of cleanliness and safety in Care Homes will depend on the skill care and dedication of the staff.

Staff members carrying out domestic duties provide a vital role in ensuring a safe, hygienic environment for service users, staff and visitors.

## **REFERENCES**

Department of Health Infection Control Guidance for Care Homes 2006

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (as amended)

"Safer Food Better Business" Food Standard Agency 2008

[www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk) Tumble dryer safety accessed 30/9/2010

