

Harrow Shared Lives Scheme Policy & Procedure No. 30

Communicable Diseases and Infection Control

The Harrow Shared Lives Scheme promotes and safeguards the health, safety and welfare of people involved in Shared Lives (SL) arrangements through its safe working practices. This includes taking action to prevent the spread of diseases and infections.

How will this happen?

Some diseases are easily spread and require particular actions to prevent this. They include things like hepatitis, TB, measles, HIV/AIDS and MRSA.

SL Carers will be provided with training and information so that they understand:

- how diseases and infections are spread and how to reduce the risk of this
- that the most effective way to control the spread of diseases and infections is through washing hands (see below)
- what immunisations or vaccinations are available
- the practice of 'universal precautions' (see below) and the need to use this whenever dealing with blood or bodily fluids

SL Carers will be expected to follow good practice for washing hands and to encourage or help you and others in their household to do the same. This means:

- before eating or handling food
- after using the toilet
- after handling rubbish
- after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- before and after providing personal or intimate care for a person and between caring for different people
- before and after touching a sick or injured person
- after touching animals or animal waste

Alcohol hand gel will only be used in situations when hand washing is not possible, or if specifically advised to use this by a GP or health professional.

'Universal precautions' means treating all blood and bodily fluids as potentially infectious. SL Carers will therefore be required to follow this procedure every time they are dealing with these:

- washing their hands before and after touching the person
- wearing protective clothing such as gloves and aprons and washing their hands again after removing the protective clothing
- changing gloves between each person
- covering their own cuts or broken skin with a waterproof dressing or gloves
- avoiding sharp objects if possible, or taking particular care when handling them or disposing of them
- disposing of 'sharps' in a special container (provided by the health professional that is responsible for treatment)
- clearing up spillages of blood or bodily fluid with hot, soapy water and disinfecting surfaces
- disposing of any contaminated waste in sealed bags, or according to advice from the GP or other health professional
- putting contaminated laundry in to suitable bags before laundering
- washing contaminated laundry in biological detergent and at a hot temperature (at least 80 degrees). If this is not possible the Royal College of Nursing recommends first soaking in cold water and biological washing powder and then washing in very hot water and washing powder.

A small number of people who have lived in long-stay hospitals are particularly at risk as carriers of the hepatitis B virus. As this is a known risk anyone who is supporting a person who has lived in a hospital will be advised to contact his or her GP, who will assess whether the vaccine for hepatitis B is required.

Some diseases and infections are 'notifiable' ones, which means that the Local Authority must be informed of an outbreak. SL Carers will follow advice and instructions from the GP, if this becomes necessary.

See these other policies and procedures and documents for further information on:

- Accidents and dangerous occurrences
- Control of substances hazardous to health
- First aid
- Food safety and nutrition
- Handling medicines
- Health and safety
- Risk assessment and risk management
- Safe working practices (including moving and handling)
- Training and development