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Iechyd Cyhoeddus
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Public Health
Wales

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CORPORATE OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT POLICY

Policy Statement

This policy will ensure Public Health Wales (PHW) delivers its aims, objectives, responsibilities, and legal requirements transparently and consistently relating to an outbreak or incident of infection that occurs within the services provided by Public Health Wales.

Outbreaks and incidents of infection have serious consequences for service users including mortality, morbidity, distress, delays in treatment and impacts on service provision and on staff in sickness and absence. Public Health Wales provides several clinical services to the public, in a variety of healthcare settings and locations. It is essential that outbreaks be recognised early and that incidents are assessed and managed in a timely and efficient manner to reduce the risk of further transmission.

This policy provides clear information to staff at all levels of the organisation on the requirements for the safe and effective management of an outbreak or increased incidents of infection. The aim is to ensure that staff providing healthcare services within Public Health Wales can recognise an outbreak or an increased incidence promptly, inform the necessary professionals and implement basic measures in a timely manner to prevent further spread of infection.

This will assist the Outbreak Control Team (OCT) members to manage the outbreak or incident effectively; to manage further spread, control communications, monitor infection rates and identify and feedback learning points.

This policy sits under the organisational Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) Policy and aligns with:

- The Framework for the Control of an Outbreak or Incident of Infection in Acute Healthcare Premises in Wales (Feb 2024), which provides guidance for all premises both within and outside of the NHS where NHS services are provided.
- The Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (Dec 2023), which is the framework for managing all communicable disease outbreaks with public health implications across Wales.

Policy Commitment

One of the most important functions of the health protection system in Wales is to protect the public from communicable disease outbreaks. This requires the health protection system to establish and implement effective outbreak control arrangements for communicable disease threats as they arise.

Outbreaks and incidents of infection have serious consequences for service users and NHS organisations including mortality, morbidity, distress, delays in treatment and impacts on Staff service provision. Each Trust and Health Board (HB) in Wales will have a policy for the arrangements for control of outbreaks or incidents of infection in their organisation that is pertinent to both the service user and staff.

Guidance for the safe and effective management of an outbreak or increased incidents of infection is detailed in chapter 1.5 of the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM) for Wales. All organisations, including PHW, need to have clear and up-to-date policies and procedures that adhere to the current statutory, technical and IPC guidance for decontamination of medical devices. These should be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum or as new evidence or technical guidance emerges.

In conforming to the principles of [The Duty of Quality statutory guidance \(2023\)](#), healthcare organisations and individuals involved in providing services are legally responsible to provide safe effective care and continue to improve standards. This applies to the prevention of cross infection and reduction of transmission risks through the safe and effective implementation of outbreaks and/or incidents of infection. The [All Wales Code of Practice for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections \(HCAI\) \(2014\)](#) (Standard 7) also states: *Policies that will help IPC must be in place and made readily accessible to all staff... An NHS Wales body must, in relation to preventing and controlling the risks of HCAs, have in place the appropriate core policies.*

Public Health Wales commits to:

- Protecting the service user, staff or visitors from harm or the risk of infection in the use or decontamination of medical devices or care equipment.
- Meeting the standards within the statutory, technical and IPC guidance.
- Meeting a standard for decontamination and use of medical devices that aligns to safe effective care described by the Duty of Quality.
- Utilising best practices in managing and decontaminating medical devices and care equipment.
- Providing a clear understanding of the organisational structures and the levels of responsibilities for the management of an outbreak or increased incident of infection.
- Ensuring systems are in place to provide assurance to the Executive lead that safe processes are in place, are monitored and serious incidents are reported and managed efficiently, and any lessons learnt are translated into actions.
- Providing the required training and knowledge for staff involved in the management of an outbreak or increased incident of infection.
- Assessing and reporting compliance with this policy and the PHW outbreak and incident management policy.
- Sustainability and zero carbon emissions in managing decontamination where it does not compromise patient safety.

This policy states the commitment of the organisation to ensure that all processes concerned with the management of an outbreak or increased incidence relating to infection are undertaken within and on behalf of Public Health Wales are in accordance with current recommended standards and guidance.

Supporting Policies and Written Control Documents

[All corporate policies and procedures are available on the Public Health Wales website](#)

- The Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (Dec 2023), which is the framework for managing all communicable disease outbreaks with public health implications across Wales:
- [English](#)
- [Cymraeg](#)
- [Framework for the Control of an Outbreak or Incident of Infection in Acute Healthcare Premises in Wales \(Feb 2024\)](#).
- [National Infection Prevention Control Manual \(NIPCM\) Chapter 3 Healthcare Infection Incidents, Outbreaks & Data Exceedance](#).

Scope

All staff employed by Public Health Wales.

It is the responsibility of all employees of Public Health Wales to abide by the recommendations made within the supporting policy document. Relevant particularly to those who work on or within clinical settings and health protection and IPC services (inclusive of those on honorary or temporary contracts, and contractors on site).

Public Health Wales will follow the above All Wales Control of an Outbreak or Incident Infection in Acute Healthcare Premises and the principles within it. PHW does not have a designated Consultant in Communicable Disease Control for internal outbreak management but will utilise the expertise of the health Protection Service should an outbreak arise.

Declaration of an Outbreak or Incident

Where there is concern of an increased incidence of infection, or an outbreak within their service users or staff should contact the AWaRe Team for advice on 0300 00 300 32, who will inform the Duty Consultant.

The Lead Nurse for IPC should also be contacted using the generic [Corporate IPC HARP](#) email.

A DATIX incident form must be completed, which will ensure that the Head of Nursing, relevant specialist Leads, the Lead Nurse for IPC and the site Health & Safety team have also been alerted.

The [Framework for the Control of an Outbreak or Incident of Infection in Acute Healthcare Premises in Wales \(Feb 2024\)](#) will be followed, supported by the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (Dec 2023).

Roles and Responsibilities – Lines of Communication

The **Lead Nurse for IPC (LNIPC)** will ensure this policy remains consistent with the evidence base for safe practice and will review in line with the review date or prior to this considering new developments.

The Lead Nurse for IPC will have established robust relationships with their local Health Protection Team (HPT) / Consultant in Communicable Disease Control / Consultant in Health Protection (CCDC/CHP). Such relationships will include regular liaison and two-way sharing of information regarding cases, clusters and potential outbreaks or incidents of infection.

The production of outbreak reports related to PHW settings and reporting to the Executive Lead for Infection Prevention and Control and ultimately the Chief Executive

The PHW Health Protection Team is responsible for the follow up of cases, clusters, and outbreaks of infectious diseases. The **AWARe team** are part of the HP team and manage the acute response to reports of notifiable diseases and clusters of infectious disease daily. The HP team work closely with Health Board and LA teams to manage health protection incidents under the Outbreak Control Plan for Wales.

Managers and Programme Leads have the responsibility to ensure that their staff, including temporary staff, e.g. bank and locum staff, are aware of this policy, always adhere to it and have access to the appropriate resources to carry out the necessary procedures.

Managers and Programme Leads will ensure compliance with this policy is monitored locally and ensure their staff fulfil their IPC mandatory training requirements in accordance with the Organisation's Training Needs Analysis.

Managers will be familiar with the management of infections guidance and will enforce the necessary exclusion time for staff to stay away from the work setting.

Managers will monitor their team's sickness absence recording on ESR with the appropriate coding. In addition, they must ensure that any suspected infectious outbreak or single case of a serious infection is reported via DATIX incident management system and notify the Lead Nurse for IPC, the Head of Estates and Health and Safety and the Health and Safety Manager for their division as soon as possible. They will ensure that the Outbreak Control Team has all the necessary information and will ensure their team cooperates with any subsequent Outbreak Investigation.

Documentation should be completed to maintain an ongoing record of all those involved (both service users and/or Staff) using Appendix 1 as an example.

All staff have a personal and corporate responsibility for ensuring their clinical practice and that of staff they manage or supervise comply with this policy. They

must ensure they complete the infection prevention and control training applicable to their area of work.

If staff become aware of a higher incidence of infection among colleagues and patients they must inform their Manager, the Lead Nurse for IPC, the Head of Estates and Health and Safety and the Health and Safety Manager for their Division.

Staff must adhere to the 'NHS Wales Managing Attendance at Work' Policy. They must take responsibility by avoiding work settings when symptomatic of infection and to adhere to the required exclusion time after symptoms have stopped.

Impact Assessments	Equality and Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) is available on the policy webpages.
Approved by	Quality, Safety, and Improvement Committee
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Group with authority to approve supporting policies	Quality, Safety, and Improvement Committee
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Disclaimer

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Summary of reviews/amendments				
Version number	Date of Review	Date of Approval	Date published	Summary of Amendments
V1		July 2018		First version of the Outbreak Policy
V2		November 2021		Policy separated into Policy and Procedure. National guidance and policies have been updated.
V3		February 2025	March 2025	<p>Review of Policy. Procedure archived.</p> <p>Policy checked against new Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales, published in December 2023 and the Framework for the Control of an Outbreak or Incident of Infection in Acute Healthcare Premises in Wales, published in January 2024.</p> <p>Details added to aid managers and staff members in recognising and managing the practical aspects of potential outbreaks.</p> <p>Links to documents and communication emails updated.</p> <p>Impact Assessment updated to latest version.</p>

