

Disposal of linen unfit for re-use

What is the national guidance

All linen that is deemed unfit for re-use, e.g. torn or heavily contaminated, should be categorised at the point of use and returned to the laundry for disposal.

(National Infection Prevention and Control Manual)

What kind of linen is covered?

All items of linen are covered. Sometimes you might come across linen that is extremely heavily soiled. Also, you might come across clean linen that is torn or otherwise damaged and not fit for purpose.

Examples are:

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|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
| • Sheets | • Blankets | • Towels |
| • Duvets | • Patient Gowns | • Baby Gowns |
| • Pillowcases | • Scrub Suits | • Cot Sheets |
| • Duvet Covers | • Pyjamas | • Cot Blankets |
| • Thermal Spreads | • Nightdresses | • Treasure Cot Sheets and Blankets |

How should I return the linen?

It is important that you segregate the linen as normal in the correct categories (used and infectious linen) and return all items to the laundry. Only laundry staff should assess and dispose of any items.

What should I do if I see clean linen that just isn't good enough anymore to use?

Clean linen unfit for purpose should be returned as used linen.

Why can't we just discard the linen locally?

If you don't return all items to the laundry, this will have an impact on your local services:

- Items will not be replaced by the laundry and put into circulation.
- The number of items in circulation will be reduced.
- You might not have enough linen for your services.

Also, the laundry might be able to clean a lot of items you might discard.

An estimated £1.5 million of linen is lost each year due to linen disposal in healthcare!



NES Education for Scotland

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