



# Laundry Matters

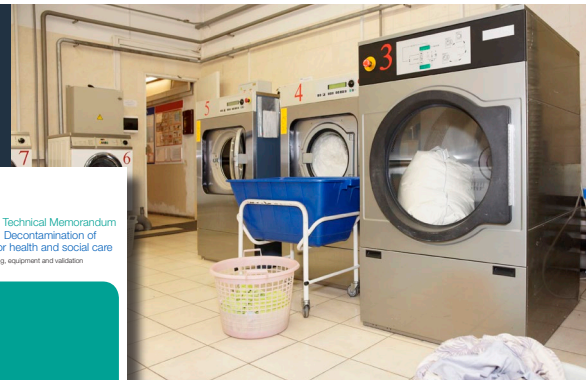
## TECHNICAL BULLETIN

How laundry hygiene can help you and your care home

**The Textile Services Association (TSA) represents the UK commercial laundry and textile rental industry. The laundry industry plays a critical role in delivering hygienically clean textiles and sustainable solutions to the entire health and social care sector, of which care homes and nursing homes are significantly important parts.**

During the pandemic, the TSA have been asked a range of questions around managing laundry and hygiene within the care home sector. We thought it would be useful to share some of these topics within this bulletin. Laundry is a complex process and has a much broader scope than just washing. We hope the guidance notes will enable you to review your procedures and modify them if required.

## What is the current guidance from the Department of Health?



*Healthcare laundries and care home laundry facilities face similar issues.*

These documents contain a great deal of very useful information. However, the details in them may seem overwhelming if you are running a small care home to work out what you should and shouldn't be doing within your laundry operation. They do clearly state that the responsibility for ensuring hygienic laundering rests wholly with the care home. These compliance requirements apply equally to residents' bed linen, toweling and personal clothing, as well as your duty of care to provide your staff with hygienically clean uniforms.

Throughout the pandemic, we have helped commercial laundries implement stringent hygiene standards for both hospitality and healthcare sectors. Supported by specific research on Coronaviruses and its survivability on textiles (conducted by De Montfort University\*), we were able to guide the industry to understand the effectiveness of laundry wash programmes on the virus.

We've been asked us to share some of these findings to provide you with some high-level guidance.

You may want to consider carefully your laundry management procedures with regards to infection control.

The research concluded:

- Model coronaviruses can remain infectious in water alone up to 60°C for 10 mins.
- Traces were found after laundering in a washing machine at ambient temperature in the presence of interfering substances (artificial saliva) .
- When agitation, temperature and detergent are combined, no trace of the virus was found at 40°C and above.

**This is good news for those involved with hygiene and cleanliness in care homes. Virtually all wash processes, with the potential exception of low temperature domestic washing, will effectively eliminate any infection risk caused by Coronavirus.**

However, other pathogens such as C.difficile, B.cereus, E.faecium etc., still require thermal disinfection. The outcome of the research points out Coronavirus does not pose an additional risk that requires higher temperature wash processes.

- The tested strain of coronavirus (HCoV-OC43) remained infectious on polyester fabric for at least 72 hours and 100% cotton for 24 hours.
- The virus was demonstrated to transfer to other surfaces from polyester fabric for up to 72 hours, suggesting that textiles may be a fomite transmission risk within the healthcare and domestic environments.

## So what does this mean?

It's likely that your wash operation is satisfactory, though you should review your loading/unloading procedures and ensure that existing validation and infection control processes are in place. Whilst Coronavirus can be removed during the wash process, other pathogens still require thermal disinfection in line with HTM-01-04. If you are unclear on any of this, we recommend you either speak to your chemical or machinery supplier.

What may be more challenging is minimising the risk of cross-contamination of soiled and clean textiles. As can be seen below, the review should not be restricted to just the laundry room. The process review should include each of the following stages of the laundry cycle:



Each care home will have its own processes and risk assessments, but key areas to focus on include:

- Bagging soiled products within guests rooms
- Separate storage areas for soiled and clean items
- Wash/sanitise hands between handling soiled and clean linen (or change of gloves)
- Separate soiled linen collection and clean linen replacement time slots
- Physical separation of soiled and clean items within laundry area or well implemented high clean down (e.g., ideally different trolleys for dirty and clean linen, if not, a plastic wipeable trolley that can be cleaned between transfers)
- Packing or sorting tables should never be used for both classifications without a disinfection process in between
- Other considerations include; keeping equipment clean and well-maintained, staff uniforms with on-site processing, self-care or outsourced processing to a commercial laundry. We have not covered recent developments around PPE within in this bulletin, however we do have comprehensive guidance available on this topic.

If you would like any further impartial information or support, we aim to run an **interactive webinar** later this year where you can put forward any specific laundry hygiene questions for us to answer. The panel will be made up of industry experts who work with the TSA to help support the healthcare laundry sector.