

COVID-19 waste management standard operating procedure

June 2021, Version 2

This document sets out the waste management approach for all healthcare facilities including primary care facilities and testing facilities in Wales.

As healthcare facilities return to “business as usual” it is important that a clear distinction is made on waste advice associated with the COVID response. You must apply the [WHTM 07-01](#) across your facilities when re-opening services for non COVID-19 patients. We need to work together across organisations to collectively deliver waste management services during this period of expanded demand.

General waste management advice:

- Where areas are COVID-19 secure, e.g. offices and food preparation areas, masks and face coverings can be discarded in the domestic waste stream if no longer required.
- Masks and face coverings worn by patients, visitors and non-clinical staff who have entered a clinical area should be discarded in the offensive waste stream if no longer required. Bins for these should be located at the entrances and exits where masks are given to those who do not have them.
- Clinical staff should dispose of surgical face masks in the offensive or infectious waste streams, depending on the procedures they undertook while wearing the mask. If COVID-19 patient follow the procedures below.

What does this mean for healthcare staff in COVID-19 Areas?

The COVID-19 procedure below needs to be applied for COVID-19 areas.

The Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens designates waste arising from **COVID-19 patients** as infectious clinical waste (EWC code 18 01 03*). It must be packaged in UN-approved orange bags in accordance with the safe management of healthcare waste (WHTM07-01). The transport categorisation for this waste is Category B. Sharps and pharmaceutically contaminated items should continue to be segregated into appropriate containers sent for incineration; these should not enter the orange bag stream.

- Waste should be bagged or boxed in the appropriate colour bag/box. Where clinical waste carts are used, the waste must be put into carts awaiting collection and disposal. Please ensure that all bins are full before releasing them from site.
- In response, **all healthcare settings** should ensure that **all waste produced in a healthcare setting should be correctly segregated.**
 - All outer **packaging** must be removed and recycled before an item is taken onto any ward or clinical area.
- All **confidential waste** must be put into confidential bins. Confidential waste bins from areas with positive COVID-19 patients should be left for 72 hours before their contents is shredded.
- All **sharps and anatomical** waste must be put into the relevant solid receptacle with an appropriately coloured lid as per WHTM07-01
- In summary, infectious clinical waste should be treated like any other infectious clinical waste – that is, as it would be for TB, hepatitis, etc, following national regulations.

Hospitals in addition should ensure that:

- All **food waste** must be disposed of in line with local procedure
- **Soiled linen** must be put into alginate bags and then into relevant outer bags.

- Non-ambulatory patients – **urine and faeces** to be put down the sluice/toilet. Where no sluice/toilet is available, excreta may be gelled and disposed of in an orange bag. If bed bound, urine from catheter taken to sluice/toilet. The use of these granules must be strictly controlled as described in this NHS National Patient Safety Alert; <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/patient-safety-alertsuperabsorbent-polymer-gel-granules/>. Ambulatory patients can go to the toilet as normal where safe and feasible to do so.
- Mattress Disposal is to be carried out in line with WHTM 07-01.
- Where **medicines** are prepared in a clean area, pharmaceutical waste must be separated into the following receptacles:
 - Blue – non-hazardous healthcare medicines for incineration
 - Purple – waste contaminated with cytotoxic and cytostatic medicines for incineration.

Primary care services

- Waste generated in general practice or primary care dental settings from a person who has been confirmed or is suspected to have COVID-19 must be disposed of as Category B waste.
- PPE waste generated in community pharmacy and primary care optical settings from a face-to-face consultation and/or interaction with a person who has been confirmed or is suspected to have COVID-19 should be bagged, tied securely and kept separate from other waste for at least 72 hours before being disposed of as normal domestic residual waste. All other waste should be managed as described in WHTM 07-01.
- Medicines returned to a community pharmacy by a patient should be segregated as per usual requirements, and then placed directly in the appropriate waste medicines container. Unwanted controlled drugs (CDs) should be placed in the CD cabinet for three days before denaturing as per the usual pharmacy process.

Community patients/clinical staff working in people's homes

- Where clinical staff are providing services in the home of a patient who has (or is suspected to have) COVID-19, then PPE can be left behind in a bag. This will be stored for 72 hours before being put into the person's domestic waste stream.
 - Community teams advising relatives caring for patients in their own homes are advised to follow the same guidelines. Waste generated by the patient/relative will be stored for 72 hours before being put into the domestic waste stream in a standard black bag.

NHS ambulance trusts

- The above principles should be applied across the ambulance sector.
- Patient transport service (PTS) crews should dispose of their food and packaging waste in recycling/general waste bins.
- To minimise the risk of infection, staff and volunteers supporting the transport of patients with a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of COVID-19 should implement current guidance for the NHS on appropriate and proportionate use of PPE and decontamination of vehicles. The latest guidance for the conveyance of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-ambulancetrusts/covid-19-guidance-for-ambulance-trusts>.

Segregation of waste – Simple Guides

The simple guides below – which should be used across your facilities – will help staff correctly segregate waste in COVID-19 and non COVID-19 areas, staff offices, public areas, and entrances and exits.

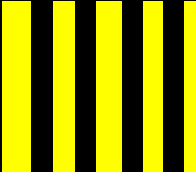

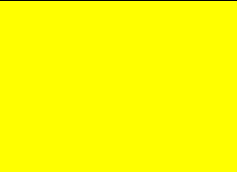

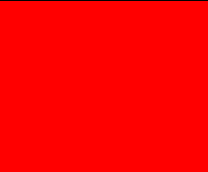

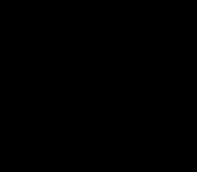

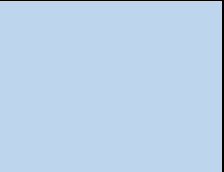
Segregation guidance is provided for staff areas, public areas and health care setting entrances and exits to deal with the specific issues arising from the requirement for

all staff (clinical and non-clinical); patients and visitors are to wear masks or face coverings throughout NHS facilities

COVID-19 **confirmed positive** waste segregation




Colour code	Waste Type	General Description	Receptacle
	Known infectious Waste	Known infectious inc COVID-19 Soiled dressings, swabs, vomit bowls, incontinence pads, PPE	Bags & sharps boxes not contaminated with medicines
	Infectious Healthcare / Sharps	Infectious Healthcare Waste inc Needles, sharps contaminated with pharmaceuticals & Cat A	Bags, sharps boxes & rigid containers contaminated with medicines
	Cytotoxic Cytostatic Waste	Any waste contaminated with Cytotoxic / Cytostatic medications	Bags, sharps boxes & rigid containers
	Anatomical Waste	Recognisable Human tissue	Rigid containers
	Medical Waste	Time expired, surplus medicines and pharmaceuticals inc bottles & blister packs	Rigid containers
	Domestic Waste	Non-recyclable items	Bins / Bags
	Recyclable Waste	Cardboard, outer packaging & other recyclable items	Bins / Bags
	Confidential Waste	Identifiable Patient Data	Bins / Bags

Non COVID-19 waste segregation

Colour code	Waste Type	General Description	Receptacle
	Offensive Waste	Non Infectious Soiled dressings, swabs, vomit bowls, incontinence pads, PPE	Bags
	Known Infectious Waste	Known infectious inc COVID-19 Soiled dressings, swabs, vomit bowls, incontinence pads, PPE	Bags & sharps boxes not contaminated with medicines
	Infectious Healthcare/ Sharps	Infectious Healthcare Waste inc Needles, sharps contaminated with pharmaceuticals & Cat A	Bags, sharps boxes & rigid containers contaminated with medicines
	Cytotoxic Cytostatic Waste	Any waste contaminated with Cytotoxic / Cytostatic medications	Bags, sharps boxes & rigid containers
	Anatomical Waste	Recognisable Human tissue	Rigid containers
	Medical Waste	Time expired, surplus medicines and pharmaceuticals inc bottles & blister packs	Rigid containers
	Domestic Waste	Non-recyclable items	Bins / Bags
	Recyclable Waste	Cardboard, outer packaging & other recyclable items	Bins / Bags
	Confidential Waste	Identifiable Patient Data	Bins / Bags

***All sharps to be placed in tested / approved sharps bins **No PPE to be placed in Domestic / Recycle Bins**

Non-clinical public/staff area waste segregation

Colour Code			
Waste Type	Domestic Waste	Recyclable Waste	Confidential Waste
General Description	Non-recyclable items - PPE	Cardboard , outer packaging & other recyclable items.	Identifiable Patient Data
Receptacle	Bins / Bags	Bins / Bags	Bins / Bags

Entrances and exits waste segregation

Colour Code																			
Waste Type	Domestic Waste	Recyclable Waste	Offensive Waste																
General Description	Non-recyclable Items **	Cardboard, outer packaging & other recyclable items	PPE / Face Coverings																
Receptacle	Bin / Bags	Bin / Bags	Bag																

Vaccination programmes

Classification

1. Vaccination waste is classified as 18-01-01/18-01-09. Note: this is **non-hazardous waste** and waste can be moved with a Duty of Care Note but **without** a consignment note.

The sharps waste, while non- hazardous must still be disposed of at a hazardous waste/clinical waste incinerator or other suitably permitted facility.

Outer packaging poses a **significant security risk** from theft and therefore must be destroyed through the confidential waste stream:

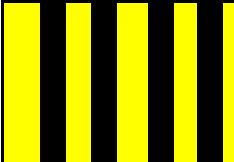
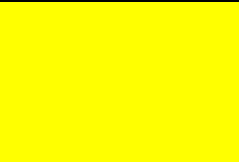
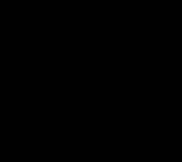


1. For Hospitals and GP Surgeries: this should be done via your existing confidential waste streams. Note: the packaging can be flattened easily.
2. For Mass Vaccination Sites: these must be stored in a secure container(s) and shredded on-site or via a dedicated service with chain of custody certificates.

Specific instructions on packaging security will be given separately.

All PPE must be consigned as Offensive Waste no matter the site of delivery.

Note: where vaccination is occurring at a healthcare premises with established waste management procedures then Healthcare Professionals can follow their own healthcare establishment's waste management policy. Each establishment must ensure that their policy complies with the requirements for segregation of waste WHTM 07-01.

Please refer to the charts below for the different waste classifications at vaccination sites.



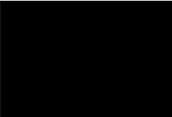

Colour Code					
Waste Type	Offensive	Non-Infectious sharps waste	Domestic	Recyclable waste	Confidential Waste
General Description	PPE	Sharps, vials contaminated with pharmaceuticals	Non-recyclables	Cardboard, outer packaging & other recyclable items	Vaccine related packaging and patient information
Receptacle	Bags	Rigid plastic sharps box	Bins/bags	Bins/Bag	Defined secure bins/bags

Sites conducting Lateral Flow Testing (LFT)*

Non Hazardous Waste

Table 2: This shows the categorisation to be referred to for:

- Mass community testing
- Universities, Schools, Industry,
- Social Care Homes (adults – residential care) including visitors, staff and resident testing.

Colour Code				
Waste Type	Offensive Waste	Chemical Waste	Domestic Waste	Recyclable Waste
General Description	Personal Protection Equipment	Swabs / Cartridge	Non-recyclable items	Cardboard, outer packaging & other recyclable items.
Receptacle	Tiger Stripe Bags	Unmarked yellow Bags,	Bins / Bags	Bins / Bags

Sites conducting Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)

Table 3: This shows the categorisation to be referred to for:

- Social Care Homes with nursing (adults)
- Regional Testing Sites (RTU)
- Local Testing Sites (LTS)
- Mobile Testing Units (MTU)
- Satellite Testing

Colour Code			
Waste Type	Offensive Waste	Domestic Waste	Recyclable Waste
General Description	Personal Protection Equipment, dropped swab replaced into a tube	Non-recyclable items	Cardboard, outer packaging & other recyclable items
Receptacle	Tiger Stripe Bags	Bins / Bags	Bins / Bags

Private Residence Testing

Table 4: Testing in private residence. The following applies for the disposal of waste generated by individuals who are undergoing testing in their own home, for instance halls of residence, assisted living, children social care homes, private dwellings, homeless accommodation.

Colour Code	
Waste Type	Domestic Waste
General Description	Non-recyclable items
Receptacle	Bins / Bags

Symptomatic individual (Subject)	Waste placed into a waste bag and tie, placed this into another waste bag and tie. Stored for 72 hrs in a secure place before placing the waste bag into the normal house-hold waste stream
Asymptomatic individual (Subject)	Waste placed into a waste bag and placed directly into the normal household waste stream
Waste generated by visiting Healthcare Professional	Classed as healthcare waste, therefore should be taken back to base by the Healthcare Professional under NWFD3

Healthcare Professional testing

PCR and LFT undertaken by Healthcare Professionals in testing locations such as:

- Acute and Community Hospitals
- General Practitioner Surgery,
- Outpatient Clinics,
- Hospices
- Social Care (Adult Nursing Care)

Healthcare Professionals must follow their own healthcare establishment's waste management policy. Each establishment must ensure that their policy complies with the requirements for segregation of waste as set out in this SOP and WHTM 07-01.

Working across government agencies

NHS Wales are working closely with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to ensure clinical waste is processed in line with legislative requirements. We will continue to work with the EA, NRW and other critical agencies, such as the Department for Transport (DfT), to ensure waste flows from healthcare premises to the relevant treatment facilities. Updates on Regulatory Decisions (RDs) and/or relevant transport authorisations will be communicated to the Service.

General advice from Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

NRW is working closely with NHS Wales to review options as the pandemic progresses. Its strategy (alongside managing other wastes) relies on you meeting all the above NHS requirements. It will continue to provide support via its local officers and/or centrally working with NHS Wales, PHW and Welsh Government.

- Expiring pre-acceptance audits: previously, where a pre-acceptance audit was due to expire, NRW allowed the existing audit to be extended to the end of July 2020. NRW has now stated in an updated Regulatory Decision that it expects expired audits to be planned and undertaken between July and September and submitted to the trust's waste operator no later than 31st October 2020. Desktop audits for COVID-19 areas will be accepted to demonstrate compliance.

Contact

In Wales the workstream lead is Christopher Lewis, Senior Environment & Facilities Management Advisor, NWSSP-SES. All related queries from NHS Wales organisations should be directed to christopher.lewis4@wales.nhs.uk

Useful links

Hospitals and healthcare facilities:

<https://nwssp.nhs.wales/ourservices/specialist-estates-services/specialist-estates-servicesdocuments/ses-covid-19-docs/operational-guide-for-the-safe-return-of-healthcareenvironments-to-routine-arrangements-following-the-initial-covid-19-response-pdf/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infectionprevention-and-control>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/dental-standard-operatingprocedure-transition-to-recovery/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/standard-operating-procedurecommunity-pharmacy/>

Householders who are self-isolating with suspected COVID-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Community nursing:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-nonhealthcare-settings>

Primary care: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/>

Admission and care of people in care homes

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-admission-and-careof-people-in-care-homes>

Advice to local authorities on prioritising waste collections:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-to-localauthorities-on-prioritising-waste-collections>

