Cumberland Council

NEWSLETTER

July 2026

Infection Prevention and Control for care homes across Cumberland

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE)

What is CPE?

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) are bacteria that commonly live harmlessly in the intestines. This is known as **colonisation**. Individuals who are colonised are referred to as **carriers** and typically have no symptoms, CPE colonization is usually detected through testing.



How is CPE contracted?

CPE can spread from person to person, mainly through **unwashed hands**, or by touching **contaminated equipment and surfaces** such as tables, chairs, and door handles. CPE is more commonly found in some hospitals in the UK and abroad. Residents who have recently been in hospital may have picked up CPE from other patients who carry the bacteria.



CPE contact

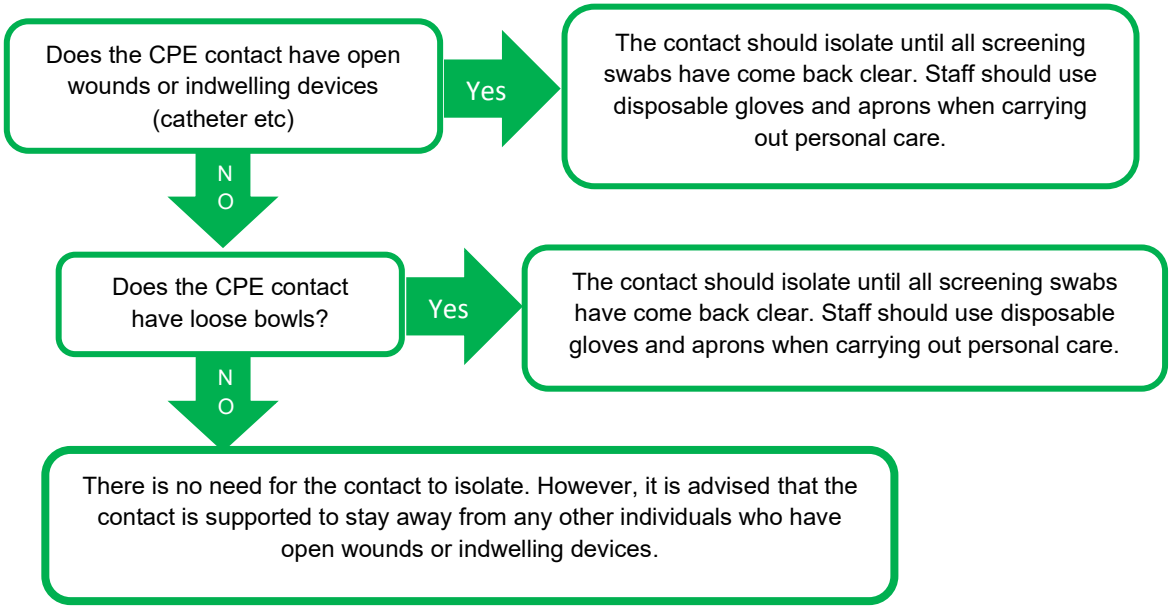
A CPE contact is someone who has been in the same care environment (for example, a ward or care home) as a person known to carry CPE.

Being identified as a contact does not mean the person has CPE or is unwell; it simply means there is a **potential risk of exposure**, and further assessment or screening may be needed.



Screening for CPE

If a resident is identified as a contact of someone with CPE, the local NHS trust or IPC team may arrange screening to check if the resident is carrying the bacteria. This usually involves taking **3 rectal swabs 48 hours apart.** Staff will be informed if screening is required and given clear instructions.



When does CPE become harmful?

CPE colonisation usually causes no problems and does not need treatment. However, if the bacteria enter areas such as the **bladder or bloodstream**, they can cause infection—especially in people with **weakened immune systems**. These infections are a concern because they can spread to other vulnerable individuals.

CPE are resistant to many strong antibiotics, which can make infections **difficult to treat**. While healthy staff and visitors are unlikely to become ill, they can still **spread the bacteria**, so effective infection prevention and control measures are essential.

To reduce the risk of spread, **Standard Infection Control Precautions (SICPs)** should always be followed, along with the measures below:

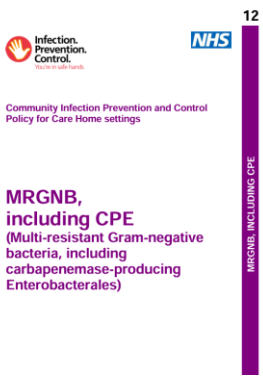
Residents with a CPE Infection or Diarrhoea

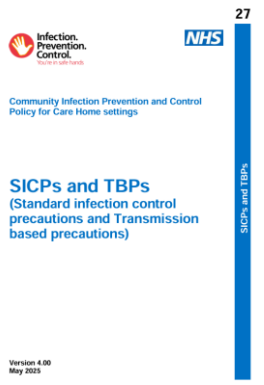
- Residents with a confirmed CPE infection or diarrhoea should be isolated using **Contact TBPs** until symptoms have resolved, or until they have been **48 hours symptom-free** if experiencing diarrhoea.
- Staff should wear **gloves and aprons** for hands-on care and perform **hand hygiene after PPE removal**. PPE must be removed and hand hygiene performed **before leaving the resident's room**.
- Visitors do not require PPE unless providing hands-on care but should **clean their hands thoroughly** when entering and leaving the room.

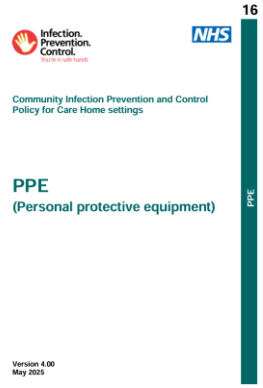
Residents colonised with CPE

- Residents who are colonised do **not usually need isolation**. However, if they develop diarrhoea, they should be isolated until **48 hours symptom free**.
- Good **hand hygiene and all standard infection control precautions (SICPs)** must be followed at all times.
- Use **soap and water or alcohol hand rub** after contact with the resident or their surroundings. Routine laundry is appropriate, but items soiled with urine or faeces should be treated as **infected and washed at the highest suitable temperature**.

Please click the documents below for further information



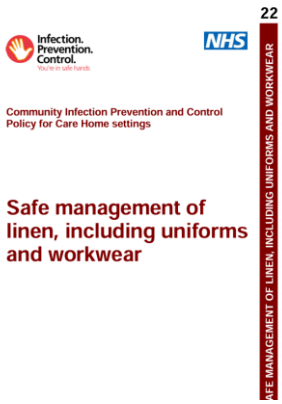




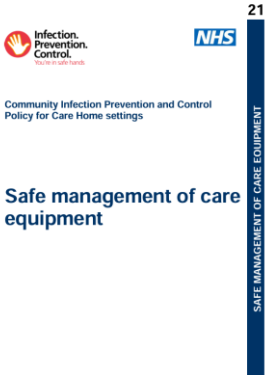
Environmental cleaning and equipment

When a resident is isolated due to a CPE infection or diarrhoea, **enhanced cleaning** of their room is required. Use a **general-purpose neutral detergent followed by a chlorine-based disinfectant (1,000 ppm)**, or a combined detergent/disinfectant product, following manufacturer's instructions. Cleaning solutions must be **freshly prepared every 24 hours** and **labelled with the date and time**. After isolation ends, the room must receive a **deep clean (terminal decontamination)**.
For residents who are **colonised with CPE**, routine cleaning with **neutral detergent and warm water** is sufficient, and disinfectant is not normally required.

Please click the documents below for further information







Key Message

Preventing the spread of infection is everyone's responsibility.
To protect residents, staff, and visitors:

- **Practice excellent hand hygiene** – clean hands at the right times using soap and water
- **Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) appropriately** – according to the level of risk.
- **Ensure effective cleaning and decontamination** of equipment and the environment, especially shared items.
- **Recognise and report symptoms early** – isolate promptly and seek advice when infection is suspected.
- **Communicate clearly** with staff, residents, and visitors about infection risks and control measures.

Who to report to: **IPC@cumberland.gov.uk**