

# Adult Social Care Operations

## Bedbug Guidelines for Social Care Staff Who Conduct Home Visits

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## 1. What are Bedbugs?

Bedbugs are small, oval, brownish insects that live on the blood of animals or humans. Adult bedbugs have flat bodies about the size of an apple seed. After feeding, however, their bodies swell and are a reddish colour.

Bedbugs do not fly, but they can move quickly over floors, walls, and ceilings. Female bedbugs may lay hundreds of eggs, each of which is about the size of a speck of dust, over a lifetime.

Immature bedbugs, called nymphs, shed their skins five times before reaching maturity and require a meal of blood before each shedding. Under favourable conditions the bugs can develop fully in as little as a month and produce three or more generations per year.

**Although they are a nuisance, they do not transmit diseases.**

## 2. Bedbug bites:



**Bedbugs can be found dark yellow, red or brown. Adult bedbugs are around 5mm long**



**Bedbug bites can be red and itch.  
They're often in a line or clustered**

Bedbug bites usually clear up on their own in a week or so.

Things you can do include:

- Putting something cool, like a clean, damp cloth, on the affected area to help with the itching and any swelling
- Keeping the affected area clean
- Not scratching the bites to avoid getting an infection
- Using a mild steroid cream like hydrocortisone cream (Pregnant women must get advice from a doctor before using hydrocortisone cream)
- Antihistamines – these may help if the bites are very itchy and you're unable to sleep

### **3. Where Bed Bugs Hide?**

Bedbugs may enter in a home undetected through luggage, clothing, used beds and couches, and other items. Their flattened bodies make it possible for them to fit into tiny spaces, about the width of a credit card. Bedbugs do not have nests like ants or bees but tend to live in groups in hiding places. Their initial hiding places are typically in mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and headboards where they have easy access to people to bite in the night.

### **4. Transference**

Healthcare and social care workers that routinely visit residents' homes as part of their job are at risk for contacting bed bugs. Social care workers need to be bed bug conscious if they are to avoid transporting bedbugs in their cars, taking bedbugs to the office, or even taking bedbug's home with them. Also, social care workers must beware of transporting bedbugs from one resident to another. Social care workers must wear the PPE given to them and follow the below guidance.

### **5. Bedbugs and Hoarding**

Controlling bed bug infestations in a hoarder situation can be extremely challenging. By definition, a hoarder is a person who accumulates things and hides them away for future use; someone who collects things that have been discarded by others. Bed bugs prefer to harbour close to their hosts and hoarders generally refuse to part with possessions.

This unfortunate scenario provides large amounts of bed bug hiding places close to the bed bug host. In addition, the person's possessions and clutter totally interfere with any control measures. The best means to gain control is first, to exhaust all attempts to reduce possessions and clutter via a referral for a specialist clean. After reducing clutter, a referral to pest control must be considered.

Be aware that under hoarder conditions, 100% control is unlikely and the cycle may have to be repeated over time unless we can either remove the majority of the possessions and clutter or the move the person to another home.

As always, it is important that you document in writing all efforts made to control bed bugs so that management and colleagues are fully aware of the details.

Please also refer to [Self-Neglect and Hoarding Procedure](#) and [Hoarding Practice Toolkit](#)

### **6. Key tips for preparing for home visits:**

- Always wear simple clothing when visiting a resident's home.
- Avoid shirts with buttons and pockets (professional looking, long-sleeved, light coloured tee-shirts are advisable).
- Avoid cargo trousers or trousers with cuffs.
- Simple shoes that can be thrown in a hot dryer, and that have minimal tread are also recommended.
- Do not accessorise with anything, particularly scarves, jewellery or handbags.

It is useful to contact the person prior to the first home visit and ask them if they have had any known insect infestation or pest control treatment within the last 2-3 months. If they answer in the affirmative, ask them specifically about bedbugs. Bringing up the subject of bed bugs can be a delicate matter.

If bedbugs were a problem within the last 12 months you can take precautions to protect yourself and other people you may be visiting before arriving at the potentially infested residence.

### **7. After you arrive, think about:**

- Wear shoe covers at all times or at least when you are uncertain about the presence of an infestation in the resident's home.
- Coveralls or a plastic suit can be worn if you are entering a home where you know there is a severe infestation. Coveralls should also be considered if you know that you will be moving or carrying items, like a wheelchair from an infested home. Coveralls should also be worn if you are physically moving people or animals from an infested home.
- Do not sit on upholstered furniture or the bed. Take a quick look in the cracks of hard chairs before sitting down.
- Carry only those items with you that are essential to the home visit. Leave everything else in the car.
- A plastic clipboard can be used to hold your paperwork. A small plastic bag can be used to hold your wallet, personal items, spare gloves and boots.
- Avoid placing anything on upholstered furniture, bedding, or on carpeted floors.
- If you discover bedbugs in the home during your visit, remain calm!

### **8. After visit:**

- Record the infestation on Azeus case notes and add a warning flag so you and your colleagues will be aware and prepared for the next visit.
- When you return to your vehicle or upon leaving the home, remove your boots immediately and seal them in a plastic bag. Dispose of the bag before you get in the car or on public transport if possible in a local bin.
- If you were wearing coveralls, remove it by turning inside out to trap any bedbugs inside. Place the suit in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of it before you get in the vehicle.
- Have a hand mirror handy so that you can perform a quick self-inspection. Check your clothing - the back of your trousers, tread of your shoes, shoe laces, socks, cuffs and collar.
- If you find an insect on yourself (bedbug or other i.e. cockroach). Use a "wet wipe" to capture the insect. Use another to wipe down the surrounding area, paying attention to seams, buttons and other bedbug hiding places. Wipe downs are not necessary if you do not find any bugs during your self-inspection.

### **9. If you are repeatedly visiting infested homes:**

If you frequently visit clients who have bed bug infestations, it is a good idea to keep a simple "**bedbug kit**" in your car or in a backpack if on public transport.

At the simplest level, this kit can consist of a plastic box with lid, wet wipes, and large plastic bags. The following items may also be useful:

1. A small plastic bag for holding personal items like your identification, cell phone, additional boots or gloves
2. A change of clothes and shoes (kept in your vehicle)
3. A plastic storage container with a sealed lid that is large enough to contain the items listed below or items that you might suspect to be infested.
4. Shoe covers and coveralls.
5. Disposable gloves
6. A roll of duct tape (light coloured)
7. Small plastic garbage bags
8. Flashlight
9. Wet wipes (i.e. Antibacterial)
10. Plastic box-type clipboard containing paper and pens.

Staff must use the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as above at all times where there is a known or suspected case of bedbugs present. Staff can refuse to enter a home where they have no PPE however must return at the earliest opportunity with the right PPE required in order to carry out the assessment or intervention.

#### **10. Bedbug Kit stored where?**

Bedbug kit items are available for any adult and health staff member who needs access. Items can be located at:

1. Dockside - On W2 floor, in cupboard by the breakout area – by the DLR.
2. Chargeable Lane
3. Hospital
4. Bridge House

Please ensure you do not take the last of an item. If items need to be replaced or restocked, please ensure you notify a member of Business Support.

#### **11. If you have contracted Bedbugs:**

If you think you have been contaminated with bedbugs, notify your supervisor of the source, and return to your home. Remove all clothing before entering the home if possible (or in the bathroom if not). Immediately place your clothing in sealed plastic bags. Get into the shower. After showering, collect your sealed items and place them in the washer with hot soapy water. Place shoes in a hot dryer for 30 minutes. Dry your clothes on high heat.

**Remember:** on-person infestations are uncommon!

#### **12. Contracts Team:**

The terms and conditions state that Providers must comply with the law and that any identification of pests including bedbugs must be raised to LBN via a

Serious Incident Form. The council is under no obligation to pay for disinfestation and each case will be determined on a case by case basis.

### **13. Pest Control:**

London Borough of Newham Pest Control Service is now provided by London Network for Pest Solutions - a company wholly owned by the Council.

If a customer lives in a private property, there is a charge for their service – please ensure this is relayed to the customer.

For further information, call 020 8430 4133 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or email [info@LNpestsolutions.com](mailto:info@LNpestsolutions.com)

Website: <https://www.lnpestsolutions.com/>