

SAFETY AND QUALITY LEARNING LETTER

Subject	Systems to check the Integrity and Sterility of Packs or Instruments Prior to Use
HSCB reference number	LL/SAI/2014/029 (AS &PHC)
Programme of care	Acute and Primary Health Care

LEARNING SOURCE			
SAI/Early Alert/Adverse incident	x	Complaint	
Audit or other review		Coroner's inquest	
Other (Please specify)			

SUMMARY OF EVENT
<p>Several Serious Adverse Incidents across different Trust have highlighted process failures within Sterile Services, resulting in instruments / packs being available for clinical use when they had not completed the full sterilization process.</p> <p>The instruments / packs were used even though the indicator tape, which changes colour to show sterilization is complete, had NOT changed colour. Adequate processes to check the sterility of the instruments / packs prior to leaving Sterile Services and at point of use had not been implemented.</p>

TRANSFERABLE LEARNING
<p>For Trust Service Directors and managers responsible for services that use sterile packs or instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the risk of individual error, Trusts should have robust systems in place to check the integrity and sterility of instruments/packs prior to use. Opportunities for checking include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prior to leaving Sterile Services ○ On receipt from Sterile Services at ward/department level, and; ○ Prior to being opened in the clinical/care area.

ACTION REQUIRED
<p>HSC Trusts should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss this Learning Letter with acute and community medical and nursing staff who use sterile instruments/packs, service managers for those areas, and other relevant staff; 2. Review and update your systems for checking the integrity and sterility of instruments/packs prior to use to minimize the risk of individual error; 3. Confirm by 16 January 2015 to alerts.hscb@hscni.net that actions 1 and 2 have been completed.

All GPs and GP Out of Hours Services and Dentists should:

1. Discuss this Learning Letter with relevant staff in your practice/service;
2. Review and update your systems for checking the integrity and sterility of instruments/packs prior to use to minimize the risk of individual error.

RQIA should:


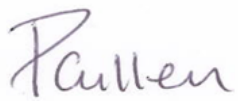
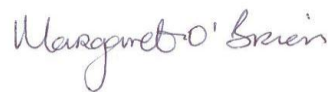
1. Disseminate this letter to relevant independent sector providers, including independent dentists.

NIMDTA should:

1. Disseminate this letter to doctors in training in relevant specialties.

Directorate of Integrated Care, HSCB should:

1. Disseminate this letter to all GPs, GP Out-of-hours services, and all dental practitioners for distribution to relevant staff.

Date issued	01 October 2014		
Signed:			
Issued by	Dr Carolyn Harper Medical Director/ Director of Public Health	Pat Cullen, Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery, and Allied Health Professionals	Dr Margaret O'Brien Assistant Director Integrated Care, Head of GMS

RE: Systems to check the Integrity and Sterility of Packs or Instruments Prior to Use - Distribution List – [insert ✓ as appropriate]

	To – for Action	Copy		To – for Action	Copy
HSC Trusts			PHA		
CEXs	✓		CEX		✓
Medical Director		✓	Medical Director/Director of Public Health		✓
Directors of Nursing		✓	Director of Nursing/AHPs		✓
Directors of Social Services		✓	PHA Duty Room		
Governance Leads		✓	AD Health Protection		
Directors of Acute Services		✓	AD Service Development/Screening		✓
Directors of Community/Elderly Services		✓	AD Health Improvement		
Heads of Pharmacy		✓	AD Nursing		✓
NIAS			AD Allied Health Professionals		✓
CEX	✓		Clinical Director Safety Forum		✓
Medical Director		✓	HSCB		
RQIA			CEX		✓
CEX	✓		Director of Integrated Care	✓	
Medical Director		✓	Director of Social Services		✓
Director of Nursing		✓	Director of Commissioning		
Director for Social Care		✓	Alerts Office		✓
NIMDTA			Dir PMSI & Corporate Services		✓
CEX / PG Dean		✓	Primary Care (through Integrated Care)		
QUB			GPs	✓	
Dean of Medical School		✓	Community Pharmacists		✓
Head of Nursing School		✓	Dentists	✓	
Head of Social Work School			Open University		
Head of Pharmacy School		✓	Head of Nursing Branch		✓
Head of Dentistry School		✓	DHSSPS		
UU			CMO office		✓
Head of Nursing School		✓	CNO office		✓
Head of Social Work School			CPO office		✓
Head of Pharmacy School		✓	CSSO office		
Clinical Education Centre		✓	CDO office		✓
NIPEC		✓	Quality and Standards Office		✓
GAIN Office		✓	NI Social Care Council		
NICPLD		✓	Safeguarding Board NI		
Coroners Service for Northern Ireland		✓	NICE Implementation Facilitator		✓

