

## USE OF ALCOHOL HAND GELS

### Briefing for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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#### 1. Introduction

This briefing is in response to a request for further information made by the Committee, about the introduction of alcohol hand gels in mental health inpatient facilities managed by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust in October 2007. Alcohol hand gels are now available for use in the prevention of infection in all the Trust's inpatient facilities.

#### 2. Current situation

All Trust staff and visitors who access clinical areas are offered the use of an alcohol hand gel and this has been the case since October 2007. The gel is provided in either 1 litre dispensers situated at ward entrances or staff carry individual small plastic dispensers on their person.

#### 3. Risk assessment prior to introduction of alcohol hand gels

There are particular issues associated with the use of alcohol gels in a mental health service. Consequently, the Trust first introduced alcohol hand gels nearly a year ago and their introduction was phased to allow necessary risk assessments to take place in each clinical area. Risk assessments were required for the following:

- Suitability of using the gel within some clinical areas and the risk to service users.
- Where to store the gel safely due to the risk of fire.

If not stored and used appropriately, there is a risk of fire or personal injury as the alcohol gel is flammable. Supplies of the alcohol hand gel are stored in secure fire-proof cabinets. Although the risk of personal injury is very small, the Trust is developing posters to put on display next to the gel dispensers, advising how to use the gel properly; for example, how much to use, to allow it to dry properly, and not to smoke until it has dried.

Awareness raising sessions were undertaken for staff and service users. Feedback from some clinical areas and wards showed that service users were totally aware of the need for staff to decontaminate their hands and saw it as a priority.