

The CARE CERTIFICATE

Privacy and Dignity

- What you need to know

Standard

7

Privacy and dignity



Two important values when providing care and support are:

- **Privacy:** giving someone space where and when they need it
- **Dignity:** focusing on the value of every individual, including:
 - respecting their views, choices and decisions
 - not making assumptions about how they want to be treated
 - working with care and compassion
 - communicating directly with the individual whenever possible.

The safeguarding and wellbeing of individuals are very important. As far as possible, you should get to know each individual; their background and ideas, wishes, likes and dislikes. You should always provide personalised care and support that puts an individual at the centre of their care. You should enable them to be as independent as possible and respect their privacy and dignity. Working in this way reduces the risk of an individual being treated in a way that is degrading or harmful.



Privacy of information

Part of providing good care and support involves building trust and confidence and having the best interests of individuals in mind. Do not discuss personal information where others might overhear or by using too loud a voice. Personal information includes things like their health conditions, sexual orientation, personal history or social circumstances. Individuals may tell you other private information that they trust you to keep to yourself. Unless it is necessary to pass this on for health and social care reasons you should keep this confidential. That will have the added benefit of it helping to build trust.

Confidentiality is a very important right of individuals who receive care and support. Information should always be shared on a need-to-know basis only, for example with other workers involved in their care. You should not share information with anybody else, even the person's family or friends, without their permission. For example, an individual may not want a friend to know about their health or if they have been unhappy.

There might be occasions when an individual does not want to share information that you feel is important for other workers to know to be able to provide good quality care and support. It is important that you explain this to the individual concerned, giving your reasons. Try to find agreement over the level of information they are willing for you to pass on. If you still feel that this is not in their best interests, talk to your manager about the dilemma you are facing. They will help you judge whether you should tell the individual that you must pass something on in the best interests of their care and support.



Privacy and dignity in care and support

Individuals should always feel safe and comfortable. Talk with them or look at their care plan to find out how they want to be treated in different situations. In particular, it is important to find out how the individual would like their carer, family members or friends to be involved or kept up to date about their care and support. They may want to be totally responsible themselves for passing on information or about how far they want to involve them in their personal care or life. You should respect and support them in their choice which will sometimes involve having to sensitively challenge the assumptions that others have made.

Each individual has a different view of what they see as their personal space so it is important to find out from them what is comfortable for them. In general these are some examples of ways that you should protect their privacy:

- always ask individuals before touching them in any way
- knock on the door or speak before you enter the particular space or room they are in
- if your role involves supporting individuals to wash or dress make sure you protect their dignity and privacy by making sure curtains, screens or doors are properly closed
- clothing or hospital gowns should always be arranged in a dignified way
- if someone needs support to go to the toilet they should not have to wait or be left too long for you to return.

In each workplace, issues about privacy and dignity will vary so make sure you understand what they are by talking with other workers or your manager.



Making choices

To promote the dignity of all individuals they should be fully involved in any decision that affects their care, including personal decisions (such as what to eat, what to wear and what time to go to bed), and wider decisions about their care or support.

Choices can only be made if people have information. If they know the options, the risks and possible implications they can make the choice that is right for them. This is 'informed' choice. Sometimes decisions are difficult even when an individual has all the information available. There are a number of ways that you could help the individual to make informed choices. You can explain information, find people who can share their experiences or ask for the help of specialist workers. It might also support them to involve other people they trust, like friends or relatives. An advocate might be an additional option to help someone to make a decision where they need additional help to understand and consider their options and the risks.

Sometimes an individual may not be able to understand and retain the information they need to make a decision or communicate their choice. If this is the case they may lack the mental capacity to make the decision.

The individual may be able to make day-to-day decisions, for example what to wear and what they want to eat, but not able to make complex decisions - for example, about money or medical issues. In situations where you are not entirely sure about the individual's capacity, please seek additional advice or guidance.

Risk assessment

When looking at options that you are helping a person make decisions about, risk assessments are a legal requirement and will give clear guidance on how to keep people safe and prevent danger, harm and accidents. Every individual should have a risk assessment as part of their care, support, rehabilitation or treatment plan. This will have information on the person's daily care and support, for example personal hygiene or mobility, and how best to protect them and others from harm.



A risk assessment contains information on possible hazards to do with the care and support provided and steps that need to be taken to control any risks.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) propose five steps to risk assessments:

1. Identify the hazards.
 2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
 3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions.
 4. Record your findings and implement them.
 5. Review your assessment and update if necessary.
- (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm)

If a new activity is going to be introduced, the five steps of risk assessment must be followed first.



Everyone's choices are shaped by things like their background, values, culture, religion or similar beliefs (if any), education or past experiences. Equally, everyone has the right to weigh up and take risks that they believe will make their life enjoyable and worthwhile. As a worker you can give your view if the decision affects their health or social care, but it is the individual's right to make a choice and take any risks once they understand all the information available and are fully aware of the risks. Risk enablement involves supporting individuals to identify and assess their own risks and then enabling them to take the risks they choose.

The person-centred approach in health and social care tries to involve the individual in the planning of their care and support as much as possible. However, there might be times when someone is unhappy with decisions that have been made on their behalf or with the choices they are offered. If this is not within your power to change you should tell them about their right to complain and support them to follow the complaints procedure.

Supporting active participation

Active participation is a way of working that supports an individual's right to participate in the activities and relationships of everyday life as independently as possible. The individual is an active partner in their own care or support rather than being passive. The individual is the 'expert on themselves' who knows best the way of life that matters to them, and the worker must listen and take this into account at all times. For example, when it is a birthday or a special occasion, the worker must ask the individual if and how they would like to celebrate rather than making assumptions or telling others about the occasion without their permission. Taking control of their own care and support helps an individual build their identity and self-esteem. You should also keep equality and diversity in mind, giving every individual an equal opportunity of achieving their goals, valuing their diversity and finding solutions that work for them.

Selfcare

The ability to have control and care for oneself contributes to privacy and dignity. Skills for Care and Skills for Health have developed the Common Core Principles for Self Care. The purpose of the principles is to enable all those who work in health and social care to make personalised services a reality. They put people at the centre of the planning process, and recognise that they are best placed to understand their own needs and how to meet them. You can find the principles at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/selfcare

When working in health or social care you need to be positive, open-minded and show respect for other people's attitudes and beliefs, especially when they differ from your own. Your job is to care for the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of an individual and allow them, as far as possible, to live their life the way they choose or to get back to the best health possible to allow them to do this.

Prejudice and stereotyping have no place in health or social care and should always be challenged. Reflecting on your own attitudes and beliefs is crucial to making sure that you do not allow them to affect your quality of work.



Stereotyping

To have an opinion about a group and applying this to anyone belonging to this group, for example, "No woman can park a car".

Prejudice

This could mean to not like someone just because of the group they belong to.

There will be times when you face problems about how you can provide the best care and support and need to ask advice from others. It is important that you share any concerns about privacy or dignity with your manager and always follow your agreed ways of working.