



# Living in a Care Home

## Privacy

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Paying attention to people's privacy is neither expensive nor difficult – it simply needs thought.

### **Private lives**

Moving into a care home is a big decision that brings about many changes to people's daily lives. Some of these changes will be welcomed by residents and their families because they bring greater safety and security, as well as the companionship that may be found from being with other residents.

But there will be other changes that they will have been less well prepared for and which may feel intrusive. Life may feel altogether more 'public' with staff discussing matters related to their own or another resident's care in front of others. For example care staff, residents, relatives, and visiting professionals such as doctors, inspectors or care managers.

### **A question of respect**

Sometimes breaches of privacy may not be about words but actions – for example doors left open when intimate care is being given or discussed. Are doors to toilets and bathrooms always kept closed and are there signs stating whether they are 'engaged' or 'vacant'.

While residents may choose to keep the door to their own room open – so that they can 'watch the world go by' – some may choose to have it closed, yet find that this is not respected, either by people coming in the room, or when they leave it.

### **Simple rules**

There are some simple rules, most likely already written down as the home's policy, that any carer can follow to ensure that privacy is upheld:

- They should never enter a resident's room without knocking and waiting to be invited to enter – the carer's knowledge of individual residents will help them to decide whether they may need to vary this due to poor hearing, or concern about risks to health

- When leaving a resident's room, residents should always be asked whether they would prefer the door closed or left open
- Care staff should always avoid discussing private matters in public spaces, whether with the resident, family members, other members of staff, or visiting professionals

What homes should be achieving

### **STANDARD 10**

The arrangements for health and personal care ensure that service user's privacy and dignity are respected at all times, and with particular regard to:

- personal care-giving, including nursing, bathing, washing, using the toilet or commode;
- consultation with, and examination by, health and social care professionals;
- consultation with legal and financial advisors;
- maintaining social contacts with relatives and friends;
- entering bedrooms, toilets and bathrooms;
- following death.

Service users have easy access to a telephone for use in private and receive their mail unopened. Medical examination and treatment are provided in the service user's own room. Where service users have chosen to share a room, screening is provided to ensure that their privacy is not compromised when personal care is being given or at any other time.

National Minimum Standards for Care Homes for Older People