

MANAGEMENT MATTERS

ACHIEVING DIGNITY IN CARE

Achieving dignity in care

Care Services Minister, Ivan Lewis is encouraging all care services to provide dignity in care for their service users. Rosemary Hurtley explores the subject further.



Dignity is a complex but important concept that means different things to different people, in terms of autonomy, privacy, self respect, identity and sense of self and value. It can be defined as: 'A state, quality or manner worthy of esteem or respect and (by extension) self respect. Dignity in care, therefore means the kind of care, in any setting which supports and promotes and doesn't undermine a person's self respect regardless of any difference.'

Above all older people want to be treated as somebody, a whole person, not just a diagnosis. They wish to be listened to and given enough time to talk and express themselves.

Dignity characteristics

It's difficult to strike a balance between preserving privacy and avoiding silent isolation, to acknowledge the need for support and care but avoid overprotection.

In putting people at the heart of care, they can make choices about their lives, what is important to them and how they like their care delivered.

Dignity is dependent on the interaction between an internal sense of identity and the external experience of the person in how they're treated by others and it's a two-way process respecting the intrinsic worth of an individual, whatever their circumstances.

Protecting dignity

Dignity is protected by individual resilience and autonomy, person-centred care and its values that permeate throughout the structures and processes of the care home and the right to be treated the same regardless of age. In the same way, dignity is hindered by age discrimination, demeaning language, behaviour or a lack of involvement in decision-making in daily living and how care is delivered.

To protect dignity it is important to involve everyone with the process including all your staff, your residents and their relatives. To close the gaps between residents' wishes and experiences a whole system approach is required involving these key players in the relationship triangle. ▶

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► The relationship triangle



Source: Rosemary Hurttley

The Dignity Culture

You will require a flat management structure in order to create a resident-centred community that honours older people and de-emphasises top-down authority, seeks to value and offer choice in decision making to the resident and those closest to them. A home with a dignity culture is a place where staff are enabled and facilitated to learn, where a culture of enquiry is actively encouraged, staff are supported and performance is evaluated with clear goals that motivate them, where problems are sorted out in partnership together and time is provided to reflect and learn from practice. It is also a place where emotional needs are acknowledged and addressed.

Conclusion

You should now understand the wide and complex concept of dignity and the many overlapping aspects and characteristics involved. It is essential to understand its importance and achieve high quality care that respects dignity in your organisation. By following the explanations within the *Dignity Challenge* you can action change within your organisation involving the relationship triangle. Remember that the quality of communication, learning and leadership in your organisation will determine the extent to which individuals experience dignity within their care. CMM

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Dignity resources

For more information on *Dignity in Care* and resources visit the Social Care Institute for Excellence's website www.scie.org.uk.

For a DVD entitled *What do you see nurses?* that can be used for staff induction contact Amanda Waring atmail@amandawaring.com.

Help the Aged's *My Home Life* report can be ordered from info@helptheaged.org.uk.

For information on how to undertake a *Resident Centred Care Home Audit: Investing in Resident Choice* contact Rosemary Hurttley at hurtley@btinternet.com.

The Eden Alternative also encourages delivering care for the individual, for more information visit www.eden-alternative.co.uk.

Dignity Challenge

The Government's *Dignity Challenge* was developed from the key concerns of older people receiving care from a range of settings. These included maintaining identity and self-esteem, feeling useful and contributing to the community. Ten challenges were then developed for care homes, and other care providers to address.

1 Having respect for dignity throughout the organisation and care and support free from any physical, psychological, emotional, financial, sexual abuse, neglect or ageism.

- Find out how individuals are valued as a central part of your philosophy of care.
- Find out how policies and procedures can vigilantly uphold dignity.
- Find out whether measures are in place to protect confidential reporting and protection of vulnerable adults.

2 Supporting people with the same respect you would want for yourself or a member of your family.

- This requires staff to use a courteous and considerate manner with residents.
- Give staff enough time to build relationships,
- Encourage staff to work with the resident rather than 'do for' them, working at their pace.
- Ensure policies and procedures emphasise the centrality of person-centred practice.
- Help staff to see things from the resident's perspective and understand what they can do to ensure people don't feel lonely or are left in pain.

3 Treating each person as an individual means offering a personalised service.

- Enable staff to take time to get to know residents including how they like to be known or receive support.
- Ensure policies reflect a whole person approach and respect the individual, provide holistic support, acknowledge preferences and challenge discrimination, support human rights, promote equity and encourage respect for individual needs, preferences and choices.

4 Enabling people to maintain the maximum possible level of independence, choice and control.

- Help residents to contribute to the daily life of the care home, as well as receive care.
- Enable them to become involved in decision making about their personal care and how this is then negotiated and agreed.
- Ensure that staff are enabled to deliver care and support at the pace of an individual and that they avoid making assumptions about people without consulting them.
- Risk assessments should be negotiated, with the individual wherever possible, and not be risk averse.
- Have mechanisms in place that enable older people to have ample opportunity to influence decisions regarding policies and practices in the home.

5 Listen and support people to express their needs and wants.

- Provide information in a way that enables a person to reach agreement in the care planning process and exercise their rights to consent to care and treatment.
- Actively encourage openness and participation.
- Offer support or advocacy to those with communication difficulties.

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- ▶ Promote quality knowledge in a range of specialist communication skills among staff so residents are encouraged to express their needs and preferences, to meet the needs within the home.
- ▶ Listen to and inform residents in a way that is understandable to them and in a manner that is culturally sensitive.

6 Respect people's right to privacy.

- Provide enough personal space for people when they wish it.
- Ensure attention is paid to modesty, customs and good manners.
- Assess whether there are adequate and accessible quiet areas.
- Assess whether staff respect an individual's confidentiality, privacy and modesty.
- Assess whether care is taken not to intrude into another's personal space, or whether enough attention is paid to finding out when people want to socialise or be left alone.
- Ensure a confidentiality policy is in place and that staff induction includes privacy and dignity matters.

7 Ensure people feel able to complain without fear or retribution.

- The right advice must be simplified to help a resident to raise concerns to the right person with ease and without fear of retribution.
- Ensure opportunities are available to access an advocate and complaints are responded to in a timely and respectful manner.
- Promote a culture where everyone can learn positively from complaints in an open manner and they are audited for action and feedback.

8 Engage with family members and carers as care partners.

- Relatives and carers should experience a welcoming ambience and have confidence in knowing how the home is run and who to go to, as contributing partners.
- Relatives need to be kept informed and given timely information, with opportunities to contribute to the life of the home.
- Check whether staff understand the perspective of the relatives and respond with understanding.
- Inform relatives of who is in charge and provide them with the necessary information to engage them.
- Support them to contribute to the care of their relative when they and the resident wish to continue to do so.

9 Assist people to maintain confidence and positive self esteem.

- The level of care and support provided should aim to encourage individual participation, promote self confidence, achievement, choice and control.
- Provide adequate support in eating and drinking.
- Help residents to maintain a 'respectable' and tidy personal appearance appropriate to the individual.

10 Act to alleviate people's loneliness and isolation.

- Residents should receive appropriate, stimulating and enjoyable activities which are compatible with life biography and interests.
- Encourage residents to maintain contact with the outside community as they so wish, this can be culturally, socially or spiritually.
- Promote physical activity and gentle exercise to help them to maintain their independence and you'll also help them maintain their dignity.

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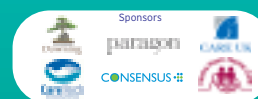
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