



Press Release
From: The Relatives &
Residents Association
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'Frail older people deserve respect and dignity, not restraint,' says care home charity.

A shocking picture has emerged in a report published by the Commission for Social Care Inspection about the ways in which muddled attitudes to older people who need care leads to excessive use of control and restraint. 'Everyone concerned with the welfare of older people will be dismayed that such practices are still tolerated in the care home sector,' says Gillian Dalley, Chief Executive of the Relatives & Residents Association. 'We are pleased that CSCI has used its unique access as regulator and inspector of care homes to monitor and report on this continuing abuse of the most frail and vulnerable. We are concerned, however, at CSCI's increasing reluctance to act on individual complaints. Lack of access to an external complaints system leaves residents more vulnerable than ever.'

The R&RA believes that restraint – a professional term used to describe ways that people are stopped from moving around freely and living their lives as they wish – must only be used as the option of last resort to prevent harm to the individual, or other residents. It must be time limited and subject to regular review. But too often forms of restraint which would be unacceptable in any other setting are used routinely in care home for older people, often as punishment for behaviour considered challenging or disruptive, or to make up for staff shortages. Overuse of medication (dubbed the 'chemical cosh'), inappropriate use of bed rails and 'ordinary' domestic furniture which renders older people immobile are all examples of restraint which can cause physical, emotional and mental harm to older people.

At a time when respect for human rights is seen to be paramount in every other part of society care homes should not be seen to be lagging behind. The R&RA calls upon CSCI to use its unique position of regulator and inspector of care homes in order to monitor complaints, expose poor care and put pressure on care homes to eradicate all unacceptable practices.

Notes to editors

1. The R&RA is the national charity that supports older people in care and their relatives, and campaigns for improved standards and better quality of life for all care home residents. The R&RA runs an advice line on 020 7359 8136.
2. The Commission for Social Care Inspection report *Rights, risks and restraints. An exploration into the use of restraint in the care of older people* was published on 17 December 2007.
3. Chief Executive, Gillian Dalley, can be contacted on 020 7359 8148 or 07971 055072.
4. Advisor to the R&RA, Les Bright, can be contacted on 01392 424696 or 07712 386846.