

Twenty action points to help homecare workers promote human rights



Preliminary guidance in response to EHRC's homecare inquiry

Introduction for homecare managers

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's report "Close to home: older people and human rights in home care" was launched on 23rd November 2011.

While stating that around half of the older people, friends and family members who gave evidence to the inquiry expressed real satisfaction with their homecare, EHRC's report highlights some disappointing examples of homecare in practice. This guidance is a preliminary response to those findings.

UKHCA made a robust response to reporting of the inquiry, highlighting the difficulties homecare providers experience through local authority commissioning and the impact of shortened visit times, reduced visit numbers and downward pressure on prices. We will continue to address these issues.

However, this paper offers ideas on issues drawn directly from EHRC's report to help careworkers promote the human rights of everyone who uses homecare, presented in a straight-forward manner. We hope that they are a useful summary and encourage you to share them with your careworkers.

Members may be surprised at how basic some of the recommendations are and will be confident that they are already delivering them consistently. However, these action points can still form a useful starting point for discussion in staff training, to ensure that all careworkers deliver the highest quality of service they can.

Local councils and service users may also approach your agency with questions about your response to the EHRC report. These action points may help you reassure them that your services have already acted on the findings. At the end of this guidance we provide links to other UKHCA resources which we believe will help.

Twenty action points to help homecare workers promote human rights

Communication and respect

1. Introduce yourself properly to every service user and ensure they know your name. Keep your identity badge where it can be seen. If another careworker is due to visit before your next call, tell the service user who is expected.
2. Get to know your service user as a person with many years of life experience and different likes and dislikes. This will help you understand the person they are and relate to them accordingly.
3. Everyone is an individual. Consider the diverse needs of service users and treat everyone equally and with respect. Do not “talk over” service users, or use your mobile phone while delivering care.
4. Give service users as much choice and control as possible about their care, and ensure they are viewed as a person, rather than a task to be undertaken.

Dignity, choice and control

5. Make sure service users know where the information supplied by your agency is kept in their home, so that they know the quality standards they can expect. Encourage them to raise any concerns they have, listen constructively and explain how they can complain if they are dissatisfied.
6. Encourage service users and their carers to express their views about the service. It’s their care and their opinions matter.
7. Discuss with the service user, or their representative if they lack mental capacity, what help they would like that day, before commencing care.
8. If the time of your visits does not suit the service users’ needs or preferences, discuss this with your manager.
9. If there are too many tasks to be completed in the available time, do the most important ones and alert your manager promptly.

10. Recognise that there may be occasions when you need to respond to an urgent or emergency situation, rather than follow the care plan. If this happens, contact your manager immediately and record what happened in the service user's notes.
11. Consider the service user's need for privacy when providing personal care, for example, using a towel to preserve their modesty when washing and make sure people are undressed for as short a time as possible.
12. Be aware of those with visual impairment or hearing loss and how you can provide a service that meets their needs.

Safety and well-being

13. Be aware of the potential for abuse of a service user, and how you can raise concerns with your manager. Understand the protection your company offers to "whistle-blowers", should you need to use that policy in the future.
14. Make sure your moving and handling training is up-to-date and ask for any extra training if you or your service user feel unsafe, or you are unsure about how to use manual handling equipment in the service user's home.

Social inclusion

15. Where a service user is at risk of being isolated or lonely, talk to your manager to see if social activities can be included in the care plan. Help service users maintain family relationships, by including them in the care, *if the service user wishes you to*.

Eating and drinking

16. Ensure there is suitable fresh food to prepare meals that meet the service users' preferences, nutritional needs, culture and religious beliefs. Alert your manager to shortage of food in the home.
17. Allow service users enough time to eat and drink. Always prompt or assist service users with memory problems to eat if required and alert your manager if there is insufficient time to do so.

18. Make sure the service user is able to reach the food and drink placed before them and has suitable cutlery. Only leave food and drink to be eaten later if the service user knows where it is *and will remember to eat it at the right time*.
19. Understand your agency's policies about the do's and don'ts of heating-up food. Take a sensible approach to food safety and alert your manager if you are unable to prepare adequate meals for your service users.
20. Be aware of any changes in condition of service users, for example weight loss or dehydration. Record concerns and tell your manager immediately.

Note

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Useful resources from UKHCA

UKHCA produces a range of publications to help homecare providers train their staff in best practice. To order UKHCA publications online, see: www.ukhca.co.uk/productlist.aspx?type=All, or call 020 8288 5291.

Making your Service Outcome-focused Training Programme

“Making your Service Outcome-focused Training Programme” is a brand new training programme that looks at personalisation and how outcomes working can benefit users. The programme includes the training staff need to adopt an outcomes approach to care and extends to more than 200 pages, including trainer's notes, exercises, CD and glossary.

The programme is available to UKHCA members for £95.00 and non-members £155.00, inclusive of postage and packing. To order see: www.ukhca.co.uk/pdfs/PublicationsOrderForm.pdf

Induction Standards Workbooks

UKHCA's Common Induction Standards Workbooks enable staff to demonstrate and record their knowledge of Skills for Care's Common Induction Standards.

Available to UKHCA members only, workbooks cost £3.50 for each standard, or £22.50 for a complete set of eight workbooks - one for each standard. To order, see: www.ukhca.co.uk/pdfs/PublicationsOrderForm.pdf.

“Train the Trainer” resources

Included in our “Train the Trainer” series to help you deliver in-house training to your workforce are:

- End of Life Care
- Nutrition
- Medication
- Caring for People with Dementia
- Infection Control

For details see: www.ukhca.co.uk/pdfs/PublicationsOrderForm.pdf.