

homecare in practice

Why reporting are vital facets

In the third instalment of our “Homecare in Practice” series, Jane Scott provides an awareness-raising article aimed at staff who organise care and who are responsible for supervising home care workers. Using a realistic example, the article examines the importance of reporting information and shows how the staff of a home care agency were able to use information to prevent a service user’s condition deteriorating.

IT WOULD be easy to assume that we report and record information because there is a legal obligation to do so, now that home care services are regulated in most parts of the UK. However, there are far better reasons than this. The regulation of care reflects good working practices that many organisations had already put in place. Why did these organisations start to record things? Because we all forget things. Often the effect is a minor inconvenience; sometimes it can be very serious. Either way, forgetting things always has an effect.

As a mother, I remember looking for a birthdate card to read to my daughter. I cleared my desk and searched for the card. I found it under the carpet, on the floor.

As a professional, I remember writing a diary entry, calendar, birthdate or note on the fridge. When we were at school we had a timetable to write down what we had to attend and when, at least until we had found the information in our diaries.

Similarly, in our working lives, we take notes if we think of something important enough not to forget. We often forget things, and then we never forget the name for a reason on the routine get up. This works well for things that are repeated. There are many things that are important or actions that we need to do only



Communication industry – it is vital for people taking telephone calls to take notes

occasionally.

There is one simple rule that will help **When you talk and listen, write down what you hear**

For a telephone call, take a note. If you have a computer that enables you to type notes directly into it. Wear a telephone headset to avoid neck strain and free up both hands.

Do not try to prioritise the information as you take notes. You can review the information later. Often it is an insignificant detail that makes the difference.

A good note enables you to take the right action and put together pieces of information that have been given to you at another time.

Consider the following:

As a care worker, you may be asked to take a telephone call if there is an additional worker who wants to earn some extra money before going on holiday. The only person available to answer the phone is your wage clerk. During the conversation, your attention that with a white coffee colour this morning, he was not on his own. It was a hot and busy day. Your wage clerk follows protocol and records the information and attention to the office manager later. He passes her details later in the day. She takes a call from a man, a care worker who has been carrying out his duties. He asks that the care worker who is due to call in the evening

and recording of quality care

now that there will be a wet cloth in the washing machine that will need hanging out. A washing is not all part of the care worker's duties for this client, so a washing machine is not part of the washing on. Her reply that the washing had had a couple of accidents this morning and wet her underwear. You record this information with that received earlier in the day.

Occasional incontinence is not new for the care worker, however with the information that the washing was not her self this morning hold et al all ringing that he has a haemorrhoid infection. If noticed, this type of infection can cause confusion as well as a decrease in comfort, and a result in hospitalisation. If caught in the early stage, a course of antibiotics and an adequate fluid intake will solve the problem. While you are not required to diagnose illness, the information you already have should prompt you to, at the very least, peak to the information that you can advise the patient and decide if you should call her doctor.

Had your wage clerk not recorded the information he received you would have only known that the evening care worker needed to report the washing machine and you have advised that the washing was getting more frail. This has happened the following day – or later – before it became apparent that the washing was really unwell and needed medical attention.

In this instance, the wage clerk did report the information, but mentioning it in passing to one other person implied that the information would be recorded.

However, he did record it so that when more information was recorded the two pieces

could be linked. The wage clerk knew that it is the employer's responsibility to record information.

As a supervisor of care workers, you will want them to report information to you, even though in isolation this information may seem to be insignificant. While a telephone call from care workers is not a practical, saving during an communication with a care worker, you are your client, you will gain more information than that which they called to tell you. You are helping them report information, which means that you can see the bigger picture.

You need to report things to your manager when you believe an action needs to be taken or when you have information you need help to understand. Your manager will be able to advise the information you give and decide who else needs to be informed and what other actions need to be taken. In the example above, your first action is to verify the information talking to the manager and then discuss the situation with your manager. Between you, you will decide if the doctor, family or social worker should be informed. Your decision and subsequent action must all be recorded.

Report when you need to take an action or do not understand the information

Should an thing have happened, you will then have a record that you have carried out your responsibilities diligently and with the welfare of the client of paramount importance.

The effect of carrying out this procedure is beneficial in an organisation. For example, with the care worker, you have needed hospital treatment if her ladder infection had not been identified the care worker knew that

her information had been available and could see the importance of reporting things to your manager and her family could see that the can trust your organisation to care for clients in an holistic manner.

In this example, relationships were strengthened and your reputation will grow. A good reputation will grow the more you do a job more effectively and give you a sense of pride for a job well done.

In summary:

What should we record and why?

We must record communication with care workers, clients, social workers and all other professionals so that all the small pieces of information can be acted upon. Think of information as the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, so a worker is not what the picture is, with just one piece, it is more like the more pieces you have.

When you talk and listen, write down what you hear

Why should we report things?

We must report information to enable it to be acted upon and action to be taken. This allows us to ensure that all those people who need to know, do now. You know what the jigsaw picture is when you report information, if you do not, the person you are reporting to will be able to identify it.

Report when you need to take an action or do not understand the information

Who has the responsibility for recording and reporting information?

All the staff of a home care provider have responsibilities for recording and reporting information. For everyone given information, you must have it recorded and reported. Reporting it alone does not allow you of your responsibility to record the information.

If you are given information it is your responsibility

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Keeping information in our heads is dangerous; holding information to ourselves does not make us indispensable. Information is like manure, it is most effective when spread in the right places