

Adult Care Homes: Strengthening Health and Social Care Standards

SUBMISSION FROM SOCIAL WORK SCOTLAND, TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

22 OCTOBER 2021

Social Work Scotland is the professional body for social work leaders, working closely with our partners to shape policy and practice, and improve the quality and experience of social services. We welcome this opportunity to comment on the proposal to strengthen the Health & Social Care Standards, recognising their importance in the delivery of services that are Human Rights based, and person centred. The reflections within this consultation response are drawn from the experience of our membership of social workers, the lead professionals taking forward duties under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.¹

Social workers are uniquely placed as a profession to offer insight and contribution to this guidance and to support the effective implementation of the Health & Social Care Standards within residential settings. Working within this multi-agency context social work can offer perspective to ensure that services are delivered in line with a Human Rights and person-centred approach.

Highlighted below are key points for consideration

- Social Work Scotland overwhelmingly supports the existing Health & Social Care Standards, as they provide a solid foundation for the delivery of person centred, rights-based, care and support.
- Social connection is vital to the wellbeing of individuals. Positive and supportive family and friend networks are assets in a person's life and can only enhance any service that is also being provided to them to support their health and wellbeing.

¹ [Social Work \(Scotland\) Act 1968](#)

- The opportunity should be utilised to relaunch the Standards as they are, with a particular emphasis on educating the entire Social Work, Social Care, and Health workforce on the purpose and meaning of the Standards and how they apply across the health and social care landscape.
- It is essential that the Health & Social Care Standards apply to all adult residential settings, and that there is an explicit link to residential services for children.

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Consultations Questions

Question 1 – Do you agree with the overall aim that people living in adult care homes have the right to see and spend time with those who are important to them in order to support their health and wellbeing?

Yes

Please say why/explain your answer

Social connection is vital to the wellbeing of individuals. Positive and supportive family and friend networks are assets in a person's life and can only enhance any service that is also being provided to them to support their health and wellbeing. Article 8 of the Human Rights Act protects the right to a family life, which includes the right to enjoy family relationships without interference from government, specifically the right to live with your family and, where this is not possible, the right to regular contact.

Question 2 - Do you think that a new Health and Social Care Standard (or Standards) should be developed or should the existing Standards be strengthened?

We need to do both

Please say why/explain your answer

The current Standards provide a solid foundation for the delivery of person centred, rights based, care and support. The creation of additional Standards that explicitly protect the relationship between supported person and their family and friends will further enhance this, and give an opportunity for the Standards to be reintroduced to the workforce with associated workforce development opportunities.

Question 3 - If you think the existing Standards should be strengthened, please provide suggestions here.

Rather than strengthening, the opportunity should be utilised to relaunch the Standards as they are, with a particular emphasis on educating the entire Social Work, Social Care, and Health workforce on the purpose and meaning of the Standards and how they apply across the health and social care landscape.

Question 4- If you think a new Standard (or Standards) is required, what do you think of the following options:

- a) If I am an adult living in a care home, I can nominate a named visitor (and substitutes) who I am able to see and spend time with to support my health and wellbeing, which meets my needs and preferences.**
- b) If I am an adult living in a care home, I can nominate a named visitor (and substitutes) who I am able to see and spend time with at any time to support my health and wellbeing, which meets my needs and preferences.**
- c) If I am an adult living in a care home and visiting restrictions are needed to prevent infection, my named visitor (and substitutes) are supported by the service to continue to see and spend time with me, as long as it is safe.**
- d) If I am an adult living in a care home and visiting restrictions are needed to prevent infection, my named visitor (and substitutes) are supported by the service to be fully involved in supporting my health and wellbeing at any time.**

Preference is for Option D

Please say why/explain your answer

Option D recognises the role of the nominated person in supporting the cared for person, and offers an opportunity for a “team around the individual” approach. It is

recognised that a significant shift in policy and practice is required to achieve this ambition and careful planning required to ensure an awareness of roles and responsibilities of individuals and staff members. Taking this approach would support meaningful involvement of friends and family members in supporting individuals who are in receipt of care from outside agencies.

Question 5 - If you have an alternative suggestion for a new standard, please provide it here:

No alternatives noted.

Question 6 - Should the proposals apply only to people who live in an adult care home (residential and nursing) registered with the Care Inspectorate?

No

Please say why/explain your answer

In order to achieve and maintain parity across service areas, we believe it is essential that these Standards are applicable across other residential settings for adults, it is also crucial that the standards include a link to children's residential settings.

Question 7 - What do you see as the main benefits, challenges and risks of a proposal to update the Health and Social Care Standards to support people living in adult care homes have the right to see and spend time with those who are important to them?

The Health and Social Care Standards are in line with Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998. Upholding the tenets of the Act and supporting people to give meaning and effect to the statements within are a basic human right and assuring the Standards in place support this is of benefit.

Listening to, and respecting, the wishes of individuals who require to live in residential or group accommodation will reflect a person-centred approach, something that social workers uphold in our approach to engagement.

Respecting private life and encouraging engagement between a supported person and those who are important in their life will positively impact mental well-being for the individual, their family, and wider networks, reflecting the person-centred and human-rights based Scotland that underpins legislative, policy, and strategic drivers.

Care homes are places where individuals live, and receive care and support in a homely (rather than clinical) environment, upholding this understanding of the purpose of care homes is integral to ensuring this living option retains a social model approach, enabling people who need this level of care and support to receive it in a homely environment. Care homes are not and should not be seen as, treated as, or regulated as, community hospitals.

It is recognised that the Covid 19 pandemic raised challenges around supporting residents' engagement with family and other people important to them, whilst adhering to public health advice. Some of this was reflected in the limitations on family and social contact within the wider community during the most significantly restricted period. However, the context for care home residents, the duration for which enhanced restrictions were experienced by them and the complex interplay between their right to self-determination and "protection" were largely unique. There may still be a challenge to deliver on the Standard around engagement for residents with key individuals as we emerge from the pandemic, with infection prevention and resource of staffing impacting on the support required to achieve these. However, we would suggest that the benefits of setting the Standards in line with the expectation that delivery of human-rights based approaches is required, is paramount to conceding to the challenges that may arise when implementing them.

Question 8 - Please provide any further comments on the proposals

- Social Work Scotland overwhelmingly supports the existing Health & Social Care Standards, as they provide a solid foundation for the delivery of person centred, rights based, care and support.

- Social connection is vital to the wellbeing of individuals. Positive and supportive family and friend networks are assets in a person's life and can only enhance any service that is also being provided to them to support their health and wellbeing.
- The opportunity should be utilised to relaunch the Standards as they are, with a particular emphasis on educating the entire Social Work, Social Care, and Health workforce on the purpose and meaning of the Standards and how they apply across the health and social care landscape.
- It is essential that the Health & Social Care Standards apply to all adult residential settings, and that there is an explicit link to residential services for children.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

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