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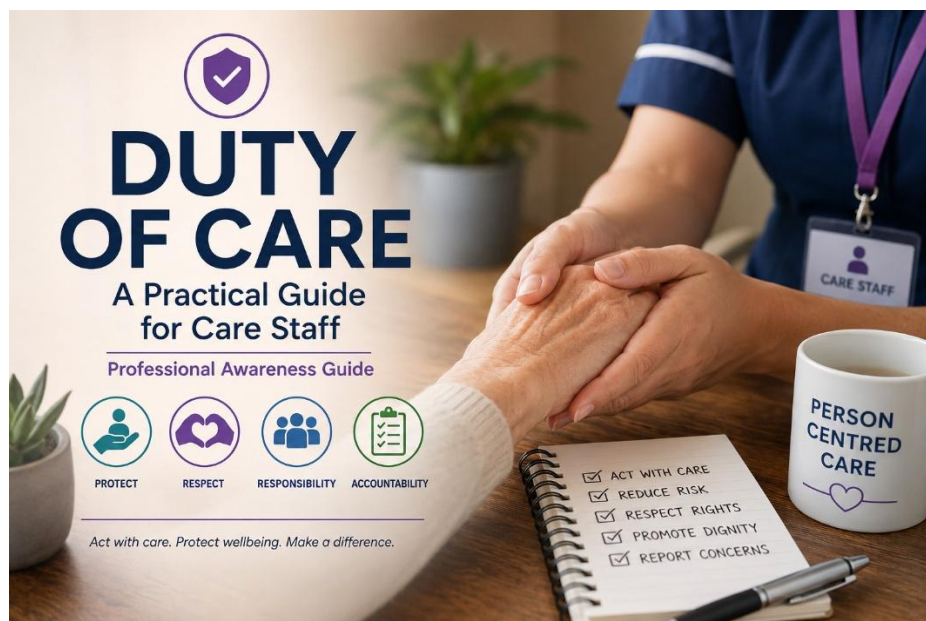
Duty of Care

A Practical Guide for Care Staff

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Introduction

Understanding Duty of Care

Duty of care means taking reasonable steps to protect the health, safety, wellbeing and rights of the individuals you support. It requires care staff to provide care that is safe, effective, compassionate and in line with professional standards, organisational policies and current legislation.

Every action taken by a care worker should aim to promote the individual's best interests while respecting their dignity, privacy, independence and personal choices. Duty of care applies to every aspect of your role, from providing personal care and administering medication to communicating with individuals, recording information and reporting concerns.

Duty of care is not just about preventing harm—it is about consistently delivering high-quality, person-centred care that supports individuals to live as safely and independently as possible.

Putting Duty of Care into Practice

Care staff demonstrate their duty of care by:

- Providing care that is safe, compassionate and person-centred.
- Following agreed care plans and individual risk assessments.
- Treating every individual with dignity, respect and kindness.
- Maintaining confidentiality and protecting personal information.
- Working within the limits of their own competence and training.
- Reporting concerns, incidents or safeguarding issues promptly.
- Following organisational policies, procedures and professional guidance.

Balancing Rights and Responsibilities

Sometimes care staff may need to balance an individual's right to make their own decisions with the responsibility to protect them from harm.

For example, an individual may choose to take part in an activity that involves a degree of risk. Wherever possible, care staff should support informed choice while taking reasonable steps to minimise unnecessary risks. This approach helps promote independence without compromising safety.

When difficult situations arise, staff should always seek advice from a senior colleague and follow their organisation's policies and procedures.

Good Practice for Care Staff

Always remember to:

- Put the individual's wellbeing at the centre of every decision.
 - Follow agreed ways of working and care plans.
 - Communicate openly and respectfully.
 - Keep accurate and timely records.
 - Raise concerns immediately if you believe someone may be at risk.
 - Ask for guidance whenever you are unsure.
 - Continue developing your knowledge and professional skills.
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Remember

Duty of care is everyone's responsibility. By acting professionally, following best practice and always putting individuals first, care staff help create a safe, supportive environment where people can receive high-quality care with dignity and respect.

Responding to Concerns and Managing Risks

One of the most important aspects of duty of care is recognising when something may place an individual, colleague or visitor at risk. Care staff have a responsibility to remain observant, respond appropriately to concerns and take action within the limits of their role.

If you notice changes in an individual's health, behaviour or wellbeing, or become aware of unsafe practices, you should report your concerns promptly using your organisation's reporting procedures. Early action can help prevent harm and ensure individuals receive the support they need.

Duty of care also includes identifying potential hazards, following risk assessments and contributing to a safe environment for everyone.

Professional Responsibilities

All care staff have a responsibility to:

- Always act in the best interests of the individuals they support.
 - Follow agreed care plans, risk assessments and organisational policies.
 - Maintain professional boundaries at all times.
 - Respect confidentiality while sharing information appropriately when required.
 - Report accidents, incidents, safeguarding concerns and near misses promptly.
 - Work within the limits of their competence and seek support when necessary.
 - Participate in training and continuous professional development to maintain safe practice.
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When to Seek Advice or Escalate Concerns

There may be occasions when you are unsure how to respond to a situation. It is important to recognise the limits of your role and seek guidance whenever needed.

You should always speak to a senior member of staff if:

- You believe an individual is at risk of harm or neglect.
- You are concerned about a colleague's practice.
- An individual refuses essential care and you are unsure how to respond.
- You are asked to carry out a task you have not been trained or authorised to perform.
- You are uncertain about organisational policies or legal responsibilities.

Seeking advice is a sign of professionalism and helps ensure individuals receive safe, effective care.

Good Practice Reminder

Duty of care is demonstrated through everyday actions. By working safely, following professional standards, communicating effectively and speaking up when concerns arise, care staff help create a culture of safety, trust and person-centred care where individuals can thrive.

Summary

Duty of care is a fundamental responsibility for everyone working in health and social care. It means always acting in the best interests of the individuals you support by providing safe, compassionate and person-centred care. By following professional standards, organisational policies and current legislation, care staff can help protect people from harm while promoting dignity, independence and wellbeing.

Every member of staff plays an important role in creating a safe, respectful and supportive care environment. By recognising risks, communicating effectively, reporting concerns promptly and working within the limits of your competence, you contribute to delivering high-quality care and improving outcomes for those you support.

Quick Checklist for Care Staff

Before, during and after providing care, ask yourself:

- ☐ Am I acting in the individual's best interests?
- ☐ Have I followed the agreed care plan and risk assessment?
- ☐ Am I treating the individual with dignity, respect and compassion?
- ☐ Have I worked within the limits of my role and competence?
- ☐ Have I reported any concerns, incidents or risks promptly?
- ☐ Have I followed my organisation's policies and procedures?
- ☐ If unsure, have I sought advice from a senior member of staff?

Further Information

For additional guidance, the following organisations provide trusted information and resources:

- **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** – Guidance on safe, effective and person-centred care.
<https://www.cqc.org.uk>
- **Skills for Care** – Resources and guidance for the adult social care workforce.
<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk>
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** – Information on workplace health, safety and risk management.
<https://www.hse.gov.uk>
- **GOV.UK** – Legislation and guidance relating to health and social care.
<https://www.gov.uk>

Further Learning

To further develop your knowledge and professional skills, explore accredited online training for the care, catering and hospitality sectors at:

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<https://www.flexilearnhub.com>

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