

Delegated healthcare activities: supporting policy information

on catheter care and management

# This sample policy outlines specific considerations where the delegation of healthcare activities relates to catheter care and management. You can insert the relevant information from this sample policy into section two of the main ‘Delegated healthcare activities sample policy’.

Important to note

Specific details of how catheter care and management should be carried out will be made clear to a care worker by the delegating regulated healthcare professional. This should include all aspects of the activity being delegated and recorded in the personal care plan.

The way in which simple catheter care and management is carried out depends on a) what is best for the individual accessing care and support,

1. the type of catheter,
2. current best practice,
3. how things are done locally.

Protocols, care plans, education, training and supervision should be in place and also account for the person-centred nature of the activity at hand and the person’s needs and wishes.



Description of the activity (important to note this is a generic sample document. Organisations will need to consider the level of detail required and review current practice when formalising this document).

## What constitutes ‘simple catheter care and management’?

A catheter is a sterile thin, hollow, flexible tube designed to drain urine from the bladder (National Health Service, 2023). Catheters are typically used when people have difficulty passing urine

but there are other reasons too, for example the delivery of medicine directly into the bladder or draining the bladder before and after some types of surgery.

For the purposes of this sample policy, simple catheter care and management could be defined as an activity which contributes to the wellbeing of an individual accessing care and support by ensuring that indwelling catheters are clean, well-positioned, and as comfortable as possible.

The precise tasks which care workers are expected to carry out should be detailed in the person’s care plan. These tasks are likely to involve the emptying, changing and replacing of catheter bags and ensuring bags are correctly positioned and in working order (Royal College of Nursing, 2021).

It is also important to consider, when delegating simple catheter care and management, the person-centred approach, including consideration of additional complex health and care needs if appropriate.

Once deemed competent by an appropriate regulated healthcare professional, a care worker will be able to undertake simple catheter care and management as agreed and documented in the personal care plan.

## Why is the delegation of simple catheter care and management important?

Having a long-term urinary catheter increases a person’s risk of developing a urinary tract infection and can lead to other problems, such as blockages. Competent simple catheter care and management is important because it helps mitigate some of the risks that indwelling catheters present.

Simple catheter care is an area where, with proper training, there can be a positive impact on both people accessing care and support and their associated outcomes. Catheter care is a very personal procedure and can often be less intrusive and more comfortable if carried out by care staff with whom people accessing care and support are familiar.

## Activities that could be delegated

Care workers undertaking delegated catheter care are likely to carry out simple activities that **do not** require them to make standalone clinical judgements or ongoing assessment. All activities must be agreed upon with the delegating healthcare professional and the person accessing care and support.

Examples of simple catheter care delegated activities might include (Royal College of Nursing, 2021):

the emptying, changing and replacing of catheter bags

ensuring catheter bags are correctly positioned and in working order

aiding with tasks such as bathing, showering, and washing and ensuring that the external catheter tube and genital area is cleaned in the correct way

observing and reporting signs of a urinary tract infection, discomfort, problems, or difficulties with the catheter to the delegating regulated healthcare professional responsible for catheterisation

associated skin care and pressure relief (from catheter straps or anchors).

Some activities might not be suitable for delegation to care staff. Insertion and removal of a catheter should always be carried out by the qualified regulated healthcare professional.

## Hygiene

As with any delegated healthcare activity, education around hygiene is vital to the safe and competent delivery of simple catheter care and management. Delegating regulated healthcare professionals should make clear to care workers undertaking the activity the risks connected with simple catheter care and, in particular, the risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs) (Letica-Kriegel

et al., 2019).

A key aspect of the training, competency, and supervision supporting the delegation will be ensuring that care workers are equipped with the knowledge of the infection prevention and control measures required for safe and competent simple catheter care and management. This might include information of rigorous hand washing and how to keep a ‘closed system’.

## Dignity

Care workers providing delegated simple catheter care must ensure that the person accessing care and support is able to keep their sense of dignity at all times. Delegators should emphasise the importance of delivering simple catheter care in a person-centred manner; highlighting ways to maintain dignity and respect, and the wishes and preferences of a person whilst keeping them safe and comfortable. Such information should be detailed in policies and protocols for delivering the activity as well as in an individual’s care plan.

## Care planning

Personal care plans should be developed for each individual, for whom care workers are undertaking delegated clinical observations, by the delegating regulated healthcare professional.

The care plan must clearly detail what actions should be taken, the relevant equipment required, how often the activity should take place, what signs of change to look out for and how/who to escalate concerns to. The care plan should also detail what actions to take where any concerns are identified. The care plan must be regularly reviewed with the delegating regulated healthcare professional.

Consent to undertake the activity from the person accessing care and support should be undertaken at the start of every episode of care.

The care worker carrying out the delegated activity should record information about the episode of care in the person’s records after each occasion.

## Ensuring protocols are in place

A protocol is a definitive set of rules and instructions that should be adhered to in order to ensure the safe undertaking of a clinical designated activity.

All clinical delegated healthcare activities, including simple catheter care and management, should have a protocol in place; protocol templates are available and they should be completed in cooperation with or by the external clinical professional.

The regulated healthcare professional has the responsibility for confirming the protocol as accurate and reflective of best practice.

A protocol should include, but not limited to:

health need and any relevant information maintaining dignity and privacy

the procedure – preparation/undertaking and completion cycle roles and responsibilities

when and how to escalate

education and training expectations – competencies and ongoing training and development support and guidance

referral/review pathway.

If simple catheter care and management were to be delegated, a core element of any protocol for its delegation must:

ensure that care workers carrying out the activity understand when to escalate, who to escalate to and how to contact when raising a concern. This information should include out of hours processes and contacts where they are different.

It is the responsibility of the regulated healthcare professional to provide clear guidance on what actions are required if a care worker reports a concern or change in the person accessing care and support. The regulated healthcare professionals also need to make clear that at no point should a care worker be making a standalone clinical judgement and should be available for support and supervision of the care worker undertaking the delegated activity.

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 We are interested in feedback on what works and doesn’t work in this policy.

Please send proposed improvements to:

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