



Tailoring the Care Certificate:

Lone workers



Introduction

The Care Certificate was introduced in 2015 to ensure that all social care and healthcare workers have the knowledge, skills and behaviours to provide compassionate, safe and high quality care and support.

Some of the standards have been contextualised to different working situations or services to help new workers, or workers new to a particular area of care, to apply the content to their specific roles.

The Care Certificate has been contextualised into six areas:

- autism
- dementia
- end of life care
- learning disability
- lone working
- mental health.

This document includes the **lone working** contextualised standards.

This resource doesn't cover all of the Care Certificate standards as not all need contextualising, some are universal and apply in the same way to all areas of work. For example, 'Standard 12 Basic life support', applies in the same way to all areas of care.

This resource is **introductory level only** and designed to be used in **addition** to, and to **enhance**, current Care Certificate delivery and resources, such as the Care Certificate workbooks and presentations.

[Further Care Certificate resources can be found here.](#)

Who should use this resource?

Tailoring the Care Certificate: Lone workers is designed to support workers new to lone working contextualise the content of Care Certificate to their role. The resource can be used by learners, Care Certificate trainers and assessors.

How should the resource be used?

Tailoring the Care Certificate: Lone workers is not a mandatory resource. It can be used in a number of ways, by a number of people, to enhance current Care Certificate learning and development. There are activities included throughout. These could be completed verbally or written down, or adapted to be included within a trainer's or assessor's other resources.

The resource could be used:

- in group learning environments, face-to-face or virtually
- in one-to-one learning or supervision sessions, face-to-face or virtually
- as pre-reading or 'homework' for learners
- as part of assessment resources
- as part of staff supervisions.

Learners might use this resource:

- to refer to during their Care Certificate programme, or refer back to after completion, to provide context to their other learning.

Care Certificate trainers might use this resource:

- as a handout in training sessions
- to stimulate discussion in group or one-to-one environments
- to review their current training package against.

Care Certificate assessors might use this resource:

- to stimulate discussion during assessment
- to aid in reviewing their assessment documentation.

Contents

Standard 1: Understand your role	5
Standard 3: Duty of care	7
Standard 5: Work in a person centred way	9
Standard 6: Communication	11
Standard 7: Privacy and dignity	14
Standard 8: Fluids and nutrition	15
Standard 10: Safeguarding adults	16
Standard 13: Health and safety	17
Standard 15: Infection prevention and control	19

Standard 1: Understand your role

You're considered to be 'lone working' if you're:

- working on your own, away from your employer's office or work site
- providing care and support within a person's home
- travelling alone as part of your daily work
- working on another employer's premises
- on your employer's premises but separated from co-workers such as on a different floor.

Professional and safe working:

To ensure professional and safe lone working you should:

- have excellent communication skills to deal directly with other professionals such district nurses or GPs
- keep detailed records and care plan entries to share information and help provide consistency in the care and support offered by yourself and other professionals
- be confident to speak up if you have any concerns
- be resilient, able to work under pressure and recover from difficult situations
- get involved in team meetings and to stay connected to colleagues

Boundaries:

You will be working independently with the person you support so it is important that you fully understand your professional roles and boundaries. There may be occasions when you feel your professional role could be compromised. For instance, the person you are supporting or their family, could ask you to undertake tasks you are not sure are within your responsibilities or skill set. If in any doubt, have the courage and confidence to speak up and seek further advice and support. Never carry out requests which you are unsure about and are not included in the person's care plan.

Accidents, errors and near misses:

You must ensure that you report accidents, errors and near misses in a timely manner. Once you have left the person accessing care or support, they may not see another professional for a while and the situation could become worse in that time.

Example: accidents, errors and near misses

You regularly visit Frank in his own home. One of your responsibilities, as documented within his care plan, is to administer his lunchtime medication.

Unexpectedly, a friend arrives at his house during one of your visits. This causes you to overrun and you forget to give him his medication. You do not realise until you arrive at your next appointment. You would have to report this to your supervisor immediately in order to rectify the situation. They may provide you with instructions or might take action themselves.

For instance, they could:

- Contact Frank
- Inform or seek guidance from Frank's GP or Pharmacist
- Contact Frank's next of kin

This would all be in line with agreed ways of working and organisational policies.

Activity: accidents, errors and near misses

Consider the scenario described above. Make sure you can answer the following questions:

- Who is your supervisor whilst you are lone working?
- Where are your supervisor's contact details?
- Who would you contact if your supervisor was unavailable?
- How would you know whether Frank has given permission for his next of kin to be contacted?
- Where would you find information about agreed ways of working and organisational policies in relation to accidents, errors and near misses?



Standard 3: Duty of care

Duty of Care describes your obligations towards the people you care for and support in your role as a social care worker.

Dilemmas and decision making:

As you develop and learn more about your role, consider how duty of care will relate to working independently. As a lone worker, you may encounter dilemmas where you need to make a quick decision without having a team member next to you to bounce ideas off. You need to be prepared to make these decisions and take action to carry out your duty of care, keeping yourself and others safe.

Be sure you:

- understand your role and responsibility, and when you should seek advice and assistance
- know what to do if you find yourself in an emergency
- are able to implement your organisation's agreed ways of working and procedures
- are able to contact the right people
- know how to access support during an event
- know how to access support after an event to reflect.

Whilst lone working it may be difficult to gain immediate support or advice from colleagues. Consider how you would deal with any conflict or contradictions between a person's care plan and their immediate wishes or preferences or the opinions of others who may contribute to providing care or be involved in decision-making.

Example: dealing with conflict

Mo is prescribed painkillers by their GP, however their partner is insistent that Mo does not need them and does not want you to administer them, despite this being one of your responsibilities as documented in Mo's care plan. You must act in Mo's best interests, explaining the risks and consequences of not following medical advice. You must record your actions and the outcome in Mo's care plan and report this in line with your organisation's agreed ways of working.

Responding to comments and complaints

Responding to comments and complaints can be stressful, particularly when you are in the community without the immediate support of a co-worker or if someone is upset when making their complaint. As well as following your organisation's complaints procedure, you'll also need to make decisions about whether a complaint suggests you need to take any immediate action prior to a full investigation, for instance if the complaint suggests someone could be at risk.

Activity: Comments and complaints



You are working a night shift in a supported living service. You are the only member of staff working on that particular area of the building, so are considered to be a lone worker. One of the residents approaches you. They are visibly upset. They tell you they are very angry because another resident keeps stealing their food and they wish to make a complaint. You have completed your Care Certificate and all your induction training but are still quite new to the job and feel nervous about dealing with a complaint.

- How should you approach this situation?
- What action should you take?

Incidents, errors and near misses:

Your duty of care also applies to incidents, errors and near misses as discussed in Standard 1: understanding your role. These must be reported and recorded in line with your organisation's agreed ways of working. At times these will call for you to make autonomous decisions and take immediate action. If something doesn't feel right, explore this with the person you are supporting, if it is appropriate, and seek advice from your manager.

Standard 5: Work in a person centred way

As a lone worker it is imperative that you understand the needs and preferences of the person you are supporting and that any changes are recorded in their care plan and communicated with others providing care and support. The records that you make may be the only record other carers are able to access immediately and as such it is important that you keep these accurate and up-to-date.

It is possible that, after you leave the person you are supporting in their home, their room, or in the community, they may not see another carer for a long time. You have a responsibility to ensure the person is safe when you leave them.

Minimising discomfort

You will need to recognise if someone is in discomfort, pain or distress. But you will also need to get to know the individuals you are supporting and understand their preferences in order to take action to reduce or remove these feelings. This might be in relation to:

- lighting
- noise
- temperature
- unpleasant odours

Sometimes there could be people in the environment you are working in whose actions or behaviours may be causing upset or distress to others. It is important to raise this in line with agreed ways of working.

There may be occasions where people you are supporting choose to live in environments which may be cluttered and unhygienic. This can be difficult sometimes as how the person chooses to live may be against your own beliefs and preferences. In these situations, always discuss with your line manager and inform them of any concerns you have in relation to the person's safety and well-being.

Activity:

Think of a person you have met who is accessing care and support.

- How would you know if they were distressed, in pain, or uncomfortable?
- What factors in the environment might cause them distress, pain or discomfort?
- What could you do to help?
- How would you record and communicate your actions?



Standard 6: Communication

Reducing barriers to communication:

As a lone worker, you may not regularly see other colleagues. This can pose challenges in accessing information, sharing information, and seeking advice or support. You need to understand, and be able to appropriately use, various communication tools and methods to support and enable the important flow of information between yourself and others. These might include:

- care plans
- handover discussions and records
- out-of-hours' support systems
- electronic recording systems
- lone-working emergency contacts
- phone calls and text messages
- emails
- team meetings and supervisions sessions

Confidentiality

Practices and requirements regarding confidentiality may differ between working environments. When working in a care home, care plans and residents' personal information will be stored in a secure office, whereas this level of additional security is not available in someone's home. You should therefore ensure you store all personal information in an agreed place and in line with agreed ways of working.

When working in someone's home, or supporting them in the community, you may also be in receipt of personal and confidential information about their loved ones and their relationships. You must respect professional boundaries and maintain confidentiality – with exceptions relating to keeping yourself and others safe. Follow your organisation's procedures and raise any concerns with your manager.

Example: Confidentiality

Eugene lives with his partner in their own home. He has various health conditions and is visited regularly by different health and care professionals and his care plan is shared across these different professionals. When you finish your visit, you always return the care plan and notes to a particular kitchen drawer and tell Eugene and his partner where you have put it. But you keep finding it out on the side or left in different cupboards.

You are concerned that:

- Information may get lost
- Professionals may not always be able to find the care plan and associated notes
- Other visitors to Eugene's house, such as friends, family or trades people, could have access to confidential information

You decide to:

- Talk to Eugene and his partner to find out where they would like the notes to be stored
- Share your concerns with other professionals, and the result of your conversation with Eugene and his partner.
- Come to an agreement with other professionals, Eugene and his partner about where the notes are stored.

You might do this through recording comments within the care plan and associated notes or may need to raise this with your supervisor to help co-ordinate the communication.

Personal information

When working closely with someone accessing care and support, it can be difficult not to share information about yourself and your own world views. Be mindful of what information you share and the impact this could have. You must maintain professional boundaries to protect yourself and others.

Activity: Personal information



Every week you support Abbie to do her grocery shopping. Whilst you are waiting in line at the check-out, an old friend approaches you and starts chatting. They ask you about where you live and about your family.

You are aware that Abbie can hear the conversation. You don't want to be rude to your old friend but feel uncomfortable sharing some of the information with Abbie.

- How might you handle this situation?

Standard 7: Privacy and dignity

Challenges in ensuring privacy and dignity:

Working in someone's home, or within the community, may pose particular challenges in ensuring and promoting the privacy and dignity of the people you support. This might be because:

- some of the care and support you provide takes place in a public place, such a communal living area or a GP's waiting room
- family or friends' visits may coincide with yours
- loved ones may expect information to be shared which you know should remain confidential.

You may need to adapt your support as best as possible to ensure you can maintain the persons privacy and dignity. This might include for example asking others to leave the room for a short while. This may also include gaining permission from the person to share information.

Activity: Ensuring privacy and dignity

Jose is accompanying Bernadette to an appointment at her health centre. She wants to talk to a nurse about contraception and sexual health. Whilst in the busy waiting area, Bernadette starts to talk about some concerns she has about her relationship with her boyfriend. Jose recognises that this information is sensitive and can be overheard by lots of people, and that Bernadette may not understand this. Jose tells Bernadette that now is not the time to discuss this and they will talk about it later.

- Did Jose maintain Bernadette's privacy and dignity?
- What could you have done differently to Jose?



Solutions to maintaining privacy and dignity:

In order to overcome some of the challenges presented when maintaining privacy and dignity in the community, you'll need to adapt how you offer care and support. You could consider:

- speaking quietly in public spaces or choosing to sit somewhere away from other people
- suggesting that sensitive conversation topics are paused until a more suitable time/venue, and ensure this is found so the conversation can continue as soon as possible
- asking others to leave the room, or taking the person you are supporting to another room
- confirming with the person you are supporting what information they are happy to share and with whom.

Standard 8: Fluids and nutrition

Maintaining fluids and nutrition

Working in someone else's home may pose particular dilemmas in supporting them maintain their fluid and nutrition intake. For instance, a person may not have food in their cupboards, or the food they do have may be out-of-date.

Regardless of whether part of your role is to make meals for those you are supporting, or not, you should:

- follow the person's care plan
- record your concerns, and any action you take
- contact a family member (if agreed)
- seek advice from your line manager.

In these situations, you will need to follow advice as provided in the persons care plan and seek advice from your line manager. It might be for example a family member can be contacted when shopping items are needed. You will also need to record and report any factors impacting the care you need to provide in line with agreed ways of working.

Activity: Maintaining fluids and nutrition

You visit Daniel daily. Most of the time you spend with Daniel involves helping him with household tasks, like tidying, doing the washing up, or doing his laundry. You don't normally prepare his meals or drinks. When you arrive one morning, you notice the only dirty crockery is the teacup he was using during your visit the previous morning. This strikes you as odd as there is usually a day's build-up of pots and pans. When you ask Daniel about this, he tells you he has no food in and has run out of money. He won't be able to buy any for another few days.

- What action might you, or others, take to help Daniel in this situation?



Standard 10: Safeguarding adults

You need to have the confidence and courage to speak out if you have any concerns about a person's safety or well-being. It is part of your duty of care.

You must ensure you know how to raise any safeguarding concerns you have in an appropriate and timely manner. Delaying action and/or monitoring the situation could put the person you support, or others, at risk of harm. If in doubt, always act promptly and use agreed ways of working to record and report your concerns and protect all those involved.

Activity

What are your organisation's policies and reporting tools for safeguarding? Make sure you have read and understood these.



Standard 13: Health and safety

You must always adhere to your organisation's health and safety policy and procedures. However, you may be working in environments where aspects of health and safety are outside your, and your organisation's control. Never put yourself at risk.

Home environment

You should respect the home environments of the people you are providing care and support for and how they choose to live. If you feel the environment poses a risk to you or others, you should seek advice from your manager.

Other people

Other people, such as visitors and household members, could affect the dynamics of a visit and change the associated risk. You should remove yourself from a situation you feel has not been fully risk assessed or could put you or others at risk of harm. You may need to end a visit early or not carry out a visit.

Risk assessments

Risk assessments must be in place for the activities you are carrying out. You should familiarise yourself with where these are kept, what they include, and how to adhere to them. In addition to adhering to these recorded risk assessments, you will need to continually assess your environment, the situations you are in and the activities you are undertaking to ensure they remain safe for you and for others.

Systems and procedures:

Organisations have systems and procedures in place to keep you and others safe. It's important to follow these. They could include:

- signing in and out
- security measures for gaining entry and leaving settings
- processes to follow if you are unable to gain entry
- the use of ID badges
- the use of personal safety equipment, for instance a charged mobile phone, personal alarm or torch.

Training

At no time should you undertake an activity you are not properly trained to carry out, for example using new hoist equipment.

Stress

Lone working can be particularly stressful. You could feel isolated or encounter emergency situations on your own. To reduce the risks of stress, and manage these feelings, ensure that you understand your responsibilities and parameters, that you're fully trained for the job, and know who to contact for support.

Activity: keeping yourself and others safe

- If you're working in someone else's home, what health and safety risks might you look out for?
- For each of the risks you think of, think of ways to keep yourself and others safe.



Standard 15: Infection prevention and control

Infection prevention and control in the community

Working in the community, including in people's homes, can make implementing effective infection prevention and control measures more challenging than on an employer's premises. This could be because:

- there is nowhere to safely dispose of contaminated or soiled waste
- equipment, such as gloves or cleaning products, isn't readily available.

Before working in any environment, you should be aware of what activity and infection prevention measures you are likely to need to carry out and plan how to reduce any associated risks. You must work in line with the alternative methods outlined in your agreed ways of working.

Your health

As a lone worker you must also adhere to agreed ways of working when your own health or hygiene might cause a risk, such as if you feel unwell. You may be at risk of transferring infections to others so may need to take time off work until you feel better.

Personal protective equipment

If you require personal protective equipment (PPE), your employer must provide this. Make sure you know how to use PPE effectively and also how to access PPE. You may need to collect your supplies from your employer's office or order them in advance. You should also ensure you arrange to collect supplies in sufficient time so that you do not run out.

Activity: Infection prevention and control in the community

You visit Marie every morning to help her get dressed, showered and change her incontinence pad.

- What PPE will you need to take with you?
- How will you dispose of any soiled waste?
- What else might you need to consider?



Credits:

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