



A personal assistant's experience of delegated healthcare activities

Introduction

Claire has been a personal assistant for nine years. She has over fifteen years of experience in health and social care. She has managed an East Sussex service for a large dementia charity and a domiciliary care agency in the same region. She shares two of her experiences in undertaking delegated healthcare activities.

Person-centred delegation of healthcare activities is intended to support independence and can lead to better experiences of care. Regulated healthcare professionals may delegate specific activities to personal assistants. It can mean better standards of care, that's centred around the life of the person being supported. However, many personal assistants are unsure about the best practices for handling these responsibilities.

Example 1 – 70-year-old person with Parkinson's


As a personal assistant, I support a 70-year-old person with complex Parkinson's, a condition that requires specialised care. The person uses a Produodopa pump as part of their care. It is part of a new trial designed to administer medication continuously, eliminating the need for oral doses and reducing the risk of under or over dosage. Prior to my work with the person, this was something I had never encountered. The person also experiences variable dyskinesia, meaning they rely on my help and support to manage the pump.



Fostering a collaborative environment and support for personal assistants with clear guidelines, enhances the consistency and reliability of care. Such vital partnerships ensure that people receive the care and support that's safe and right for them whilst supporting the health and social care sector.

Claire, Personal Assistant





To ensure I could provide the right care, I was invited to the neurological department at Brighton Hospital. I observed a Parkinson's nurse specialist setting up the pump. I learned how to choose suitable infusion sites, ensuring they were at least 5 cm from the navel and at least 2.5 cm from previous infusion sites. The registered nurse also taught me how to recognise signs of skin irritation, including skin tears, hardened areas and scarring.

The training provided me with practical knowledge, such as changing the cannula. This involved pulling it straight out from the housing, carefully removing the infusion set, and disconnecting the tubing from the pump. This procedure must be done every three days. I was also instructed on the safe disposal of the infusion set in a sharps box.

My experience and collaboration with healthcare professionals has been invaluable, giving me the confidence to support people properly. Throughout this training, I've gained a new level of competence in handling delegated activities and feel much better equipped to provide the specialised care the person requires.

Example 2 – Person with changing care needs requiring catheter care

I had been supporting a person for three years as a personal assistant when his health took a turn. He required catheter care due to prostate enlargement. The person, a 57-year-old man, began using an indwelling catheter, which remains in place for extended periods and is secured by a small balloon inflated inside the bladder. Since catheter care was new to me, I needed proper training to provide the best support.

During one of my visits to the gentleman, a district nurse came to the home and provided me with essential training on how to manage the catheter. I learned that indwelling catheters are thin, flexible tubes inserted through the urethra into the bladder, where the balloon is inflated to keep them in place. The nurse explained that catheters help drain urine when a person cannot urinate independently. I was shown how to manage the catheter at home, including the importance of keeping the area clean and dry.

In addition, I was trained to empty the drainage bag regularly if the person couldn't do it himself. I was shown how to look out for signs of infection, such as fever, redness, swelling, or pain around the insertion site. This training gave me the knowledge and confidence to perform this important healthcare activity, ensuring the person received the care he needed.

The experience highlighted how crucial communication between personal assistants and health care professional staff is. The collaborative support from the district nurse not only equipped me with new skills but also strengthened the relationship between all parties involved, leading to a higher quality of care.

Find out more about delegated healthcare activities

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