

Delegated healthcare activities: supporting policy information on simple wound care

# This sample policy outlines specific considerations where the delegation of healthcare activities relates to simple wound care. For the purpose of this sample policy when we refer to simple wounds, this could include skin tears. 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 simple wound care should be carried out should all be made clear to the care worker by the delegating regulated healthcare professional. Protocols, care plans, training and supervision should account for information such as: preparation for the activity, infection control, how to remove an old dressing, how to clean a wound, when/ how to apply cream to a wound, what dressing to use, how to apply a dressing, and how this activity should be recorded (amongst other important information such as escalation plans and other documentation outlined in this policy).

The way in which simple wound care is carried out is case specific and depends on

1. what is best for the individual accessing care and support,
2. current best practice,
3. how things are done locally (i.e. dressings and topical creams will differ according to local provision).

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.



## What constitutes simple wound care and/or skin tear management?

For the purposes of this sample policy, simple wound care and/or skin tear management could be defined as the cleaning of sites and application of dry dressings to prevent deterioration of wound and infection (Health Services Executive, 2018).

Simple wound care, the application of dry dressings and the first aid management of skin tears is not a replacement for meeting the ongoing clinical needs of people accessing care and support and should not require care workers to make a clinical assessment of wounds and how these should be treated.

Simple wound care and/or skin tear management enables care workers to safely clean and cover simple wounds as a first aid measure using the appropriate dressing.

It is also important to consider, when delegating simple wound care and/or skin tear management, the person-centred approach including consideration of additional complex health and care needs if appropriate. (International Wound Infection Institute, 2022).

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

## Why is simple wound care and/or skin-tear management important?

To recognise early clinical changes so the activity can be adapted to meet the needs of the person.

To recognise and escalate early signs of concern such as developing infection, dehydration, or skin disorders.

To enable regulated healthcare professionals to act promptly, appropriately and maintain people’s safety and improve their health outcomes.

(National Wound Care Strategy Programme, 2023; International World Infection Institute, 2022)

## Activities that could be delegated

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

Examples of activities that might be delegated include safely: removing an old dressing

irrigating a wound

applying cream to the wound applying a new dressing.

All activities will be as advised, trained and recorded in the personal care plan by the regulated healthcare professional (Health Services Executive, 2018; National Wound Care Strategy Programme, 2023; International World Infection Institute, 2022).

Complex wounds tend to need timely review, ongoing assessment and clinical decision making to ensure treatment is appropriate therefore should not be recommended for delegated healthcare activities.

## Care planning

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

The care plan must clearly detail what actions should be taken including what dressings to apply, frequency of dressing change, review timeframes, signs of deterioration of the wound including signs of infection and how/who to escalate concerns to. The care plan should also detail what actions to take where

any concerns are identified. This care plan must be regularly reviewed with the delegating regulated healthcare professional. It is useful to include in the personal care plan a body map detailing the position of wounds or skin tears and a skin monitoring chart put in place until the wound has healed.

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 wound care and/or skin tear management, should have a written protocol in place that has been completed and agreed with the delegating regulated healthcare professional and the organisation.

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

A protocol should include but not be limited to:

health need and any relevant information that would support the activity 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 wound care and/or skin tear management is delegated to a care worker, a key element of any protocol detailing how to undertake the activity should ensure that care workers carrying out the activity understand when to escalate, who to escalate to and who to make 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 delegating regulated healthcare professional to provide clear guidance on what actions are required if a care worker is concerned about a wound. The regulated healthcare professional also needs 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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