



Do you deliver dignity?

With 3000 Dignity Champions already on board 2009 will see a real push from the Government to promote dignity in care. Walter Brennan explores how to ensure dignity for your clients.

When Sir Michael Parkinson visited his sick mother Freda in care he was struck by the contrast in the behaviour and levels of care displayed by those charged with looking after her. Sir Michael talked about what he saw at first hand: 'I saw a mixture of indifferent and wonderful nursing.' Such was the impact made upon the former writer and presenter he signed up and became one of the UK's first Dignity Champions.

He continued: '[When I was younger] older people were treated with reverence and a bit of respect. Nowadays I think that's gone and I think we need to remind people that these are human beings, they're not just crabbed old people in a corner, behind that face is a young person, actually, who wants to be treated with some kind of dignity.'

So why should one of the most fundamental, underpinning foundations of care and treatment require celebrities and ambassadors to remind us just what is dignity? As one patient spoken to said: 'I think some nurses and doctors have forgotten how

to treat people with respect and decency. They seem to lack basic manners.'

What is dignity?

Dignity can be defined as being respected and treated fairly, free from discrimination, abuse and harassment. It is also about being accepted for who you are not what you are. The Oxford English Dictionary definition contains one word that sums up just what dignity is about...worthiness, being made to feel worthy, promoting and maintaining self-worth for people who may be feeling low in confidence and wellbeing.

Dignity Challenge

The Department of Health has introduced the Dignity Challenge and stated that high quality care services that respect people's dignity

should implement the following 10 standards.

1 Have a zero tolerance of all forms of abuse

It's vital that care staff are fully aware of how abuse can happen and have in place safeguarding policy, with training so they understand abuse in all its various forms and how to deal with it immediately.

2 Support people with the same respect you would want for yourself or a member of your family

Good care settings should always be based upon a positive set of

values. It never hurts to remind staff that the people receiving care or support could be your own loved mother, brother, son or daughter.

3 Treat each person as an individual by offering a personalised service

Care workers need to treat service users as people and ensure a full and comprehensive history and profile is compiled. This should be obtained from the person, their relatives and other sources and enables staff to recognise the individuality of each person they deal with and ensure that care plans are individualised. ▶

Dignity Audit

- 1 What do you understand by the word dignity?
- 2 Why would you say dignity is important?
- 3 On a scale of 1-10 (1-3 = low 4-6 = medium 7- 10= high) how would you say your home would score in terms of dignity promotion?
- 4 Are all service users asked how they would like to be addressed when admitted? Is this preferred title documented and communicated to staff?
- 5 How do you ensure that service user choice is respected and forms an integral part of the care programme?
- 6 Do you have separate sleeping areas for men and women? If no, how do you manage this problem?
- 7 When a person needs a bed pan/toilet, how long may they be expected to wait?
- 8 What choice of clothes are service users given? Can they wear their own clothing?
- 9 How much choice is given over meals?
- 10 How do you ensure that patients/service users eat the right amount of food?
- 11 How often do staff sit and spend time talking with service users with the intention of building a positive friendship? Do you record these findings, if so, where?
- 12 How do you ensure the environments for meals, toilets and dressing promote dignity?
- 13 How do you ensure that conversations relating to service user care take place with their agreement and with input from them?
- 14 If you saw a member of staff shouting at a service users, what would you do?
- 15 How do you reassure and comfort a patient who expresses fear and anxiety?
- 16 How does the behaviour of other service user's impact on dignity? How is this managed?
- 17 How do you respond to a service user or relative who makes a complaint about standards of care or treatment?
- 18 Would you be happy for a loved member of your family to be treated in your home?
- 19 Are you able to demonstrate that other members of the care team share your values, or do they behave differently?
- 20 How are you able to demonstrate that service users are given information about their condition/treatment in easy to understand language?

Use your answers to shape your service and ensure that your clients are treated with dignity and respect. To keep moving forward repeat the audit regularly and make any changes necessary.

DO YOU DELIVER DIGNITY?

A survey of more than 130 patients, service users, relatives and carers carried out by the author found that staff often:

'Forget we are people and human beings.' 'Talk about us when we are sat there and ignore us.'

'Think that because they have seen other people naked I shouldn't be embarrassed about being looked at. My husband was the only person who had seen me.'

'Patronising and arrogantly feed the service users whilst talking on their mobile phones to their mates about what they did last night!'

► **4 Enable people to maintain the maximum possible level of independence, choice and control**

Promoting independence is a fundamental human right. Independence, choice and control are crucial stepping stones to the promotion of independence.

5 Listen and support people to express their needs and wants

When people don't feel they are safe enough to talk, they won't express their needs and wants. Pivotal to achieving this, is training staff to promote the right caring, safe atmosphere, where vulnerable people feel able to say what they want and need and staff are keen to help them achieve this.

6 Respect people's right to privacy

Personal space should be available and accessible and areas of sensitivity relating to modesty, gender, culture or religion and basic manners should be fully respected. It is important that people aren't made to feel embarrassed.

7 Ensure people feel able to complain without fear of retribution

This standard almost follows on from Standard 5. Namely, if we do listen to a person's needs and wants, then we must also accept that their needs and wants may conflict with what we believe to be in the person's best interest, or they may be directly or indirectly critical of what we do or who we are. But if dignity is a real and dynamic concept, then complaints must be addressed and the person making the complaint must also feel safe enough to make them.

8 Engage with family members and carers as care partners

Collaborative care has been a by-word in the past and it means that everybody involved in the care of a person is likely to have a contribution to make. Qualifications and expertise don't eclipse knowing a person intimately, understanding and recognising their nuances. But those who do spend time with the person are most likely to bring a major contribution to the care table.

9 Assist people to maintain confidence and a positive self-esteem

Losing independence through poor health or illness can devastate confidence and consequently self-esteem is severely impoverished. Being unwell can quickly persuade a person to believe that they must adopt a sick role. They shouldn't expect to enjoy good physical and emotional wellbeing. A major role for staff is to understand the process of positive emotional wellbeing and use small exercises and tasks aimed at helping the person to restore self confidence gradually.

10 Act to alleviate people's loneliness and isolation

For some people being in care means that the staff are the most significant people in their lives. Isolation can be physical, emotional

and social. It's important that care workers understand the impact of loneliness and view its alleviation as a key role. This can be by helping to maintain family and friends, introducing new friends, activities or associations. But most of all, by devoting time to the person and enjoying their company too.

Dignity training

In a bid to address the dignity issue there are training courses available incorporating group work, case studies and experiential work to get the dignity message across. Learning outcomes should include: What is dignity? Why is it important? The Dignity Challenge; How to promote dignity in your place of work; Using empathy to improve practice and How does your place of care measure up?

Integral to achieving dignity is the Dignity Audit. This tool has been developed to explore dignity and ask the searching questions any loved one's relatives would want to ask.

The People's Award for Dignity in Care

The first ever award that recognises people who treat patients with dignity and respect and who provide outstanding care has been launched by Sir Michael Parkinson and Care Services Minister Phil Hope MP.

The People's Award for Dignity in Care is open to everyone. Anyone can nominate individuals or teams who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to improve patient dignity in care. Local nominees will be put forward for a regional award and one overall winner will then be chosen by a panel of national judges.

Nominations are now open and close on 6th March 2009. Dignity should be an integral part of your care service, follow the Dignity Challenge to see if you're up to scratch.

CMM

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Useful resources

Dignity in Care website
<http://networks.csip.org.uk/dignityincare>

Dignity in Care practice guide
www.scie.org.uk/publications/practiceguides/practiceguide09/index.aspx

Department of Health website
www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Socialcarereform/Dignityincare/index.htm

Health and Social Care Awards
www.healthandsocialcareawards.org.uk