PEOPLESAFE

CARER SAFETY:
AT A GLANCE

COMMON SAFETY ISSUES IN SOCIAL CARE

Social care provides a whole range of services to support adults and the elderly with 1.48 million people1 currently employed in the sector. Positions within the health and social care industry often come with risks. Here are some of the most common safety issues:

VIOLENCE

Dealing with challenging behaviour such as verbal or physical abuse is a common risk for carers, particularly if they are dealing with patients with a mental illness. 72% of carers have suffered mental ill-health2, including stress, anxiety and depression as a result.

COMPETENCE

Carers may have to use certain items of equipment while looking after their patients – for example, a hoist can be used to reduce manual handling. Staff need to be competent to do the job safely and be trained to use the equipment properly.

COMMUNICATION

Nearly 1 in 5 care workers was born outside the UK (18.4%)3. If workers have a limited understanding of English, they may not understand the health and safety training they're given, may not be able to communicate effectively with colleagues and supervisors and may misunderstand safety critical communications.

CONFUSION

Workers may be unfamiliar with the site or the work being done, especially if they are young or inexperienced. 37% of care workers have less than three years' experience, with 9% of the adult social care workforce under 254. They may not recognise certain hazards as a potential source of danger or understand 'obvious' rules for use of equipment.

OBLIGATIONS AS A CARER

Helping patients with immediate needs such as washing, dressing and maintaining their hygiene

Many of these activities involve manual handling. Poor moving and handling practices can lead to back pain and musculoskeletal disorders.

Undertaking basic day- to-day tasks such as hoovering, washing up and mopping

Home carers can be at an increased risk of slips and trips, especially if they are in unfamiliar surroundings.

Providing patients with emotional support and company

While this can be rewarding, it can also be draining on mental health, especially if the patient begins to deteriorate as a result of their health conditions or age.

EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

- Legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of all their workers

- Implement effective policies and procedures (including incident and accident reporting)

- Record, monitor and regularly review risk assessments

- Ensure staff receive relevant training for their role. This might include health and safety best practices, manual handling and conflict resolution

TOP TIPS FOR SAFER WORKING PRACTICES

- If you're worried about violence from a patient, keep a clear path to the door so you don't allow yourself to become trapped in.

- Take advantage of manual handling training and learn how to safely move people as well as items and objects.

- Understand how all the equipment you're required to use works and make sure that it has been regularly maintained.

- Carry a personal safety alarm which can pinpoint your location and summon help in the event of an emergency.

- Wearing sensible footwear and being cautious of trailing wires will help to minimise the risk of slips and trips.

PERSONAL SAFETY ALARM USE CASES

SOS alert for verbal or physical abuse

Fall detection after a slip or trip, or medical emergency

Manual handling accident

Set timers due to poor mobile signal

FIND OUT MORE:

For more information about how to control the risks faced by social care workers, get in touch with the personal safety experts at Peoplesafe:

www.peoplesafe.co.uk/contact-us

sales@peoplesafe.co.uk

0800 990 3563

1 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-social-care

2 www.carersuk.org/images/Facts_about_Carers_2019.pdf

3 independent-age-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2016-05/IA%20Moved%20to%20care%20report_12%2011%2015.pdf

4 www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data-/Workforce-intelligence/documents/State-of-the-adult-social-care-sector/State-of-Report-2019.pdf