

# Elevating skin health in social care: A new era of collaboration and innovation

Despite the growing recognition of skin health and wound care as a critical component of health and well-being, its true prevalence within social care settings remains largely unknown. Unlike healthcare environments where data collection is by comparison systematic and standardised, social care providers operate across a diverse landscape of electronic care record systems, with some still reliant on paper-based documentation. This fragmentation presents a significant barrier to understanding the scale and complexity of skin health needs in these settings.

Care homes vary widely in the type of support they offer, directly influencing how skin health and wound care are managed. Residential care homes typically support individuals with personal care and mobility needs, and staff are not trained to deliver complex clinical interventions. Skin and wound assessments and management in these settings often depend on external healthcare professionals, resulting in disjointed records and, in some cases, a lack of follow-up guidance after clinical visits.

In contrast, nursing homes employ registered nurses who provide continuous clinical oversight, enabling more responsive and comprehensive skin care. However, even within nursing homes, practices and resources can differ significantly depending on whether the provider is independent, charitable, or run by a local authority. These variations can affect staff training and competence, access to specialist equipment and services, and compromise the quality of skin health provision.

As a Tissue Viability Nurse involved in the transformation of wound and skin health services, I have witnessed firsthand how innovative partnerships can lead to a shared vision that brings the courage to challenge the status quo and improve lives. In 2025, we have seen great strides towards integrating standardised pathways of care into practice,

focusing on workforce empowerment and digital solutions in wound care pathways. This is particularly relevant in the context of ongoing NHS transformation efforts. As the NHS continues to shift towards neighbourhood health services, there is a growing emphasis on partnership working between health and social care. The government's 10-year healthcare plan reinforces this direction, prioritising digital innovation, workforce development, and standardised care pathways. As we move forward, the mission will be to ensure transformation is inclusive, offering system-wide expertise and opportunities that keep the workforce and service user needs at the heart of strategies for change.

In 2025, the formation of a dedicated national working group that brings together multiple care home organisations and NHS leaders marks a new era of collaboration. It reflects a shared commitment to embracing transformation and delivering on the wider healthcare vision, improving services and outcomes for those we serve. Another recent and exciting milestone within this agenda is the introduction of a dedicated Social Care Forum at the Wounds UK 2025 conference. This provides the care home workforce with a platform to access tailored education and for care organisations to showcase their innovative work within the tissue viability space.

As the social care sector moves forward, aligned with the government's 10-year healthcare plan, there is a renewed commitment to innovation and integration. This editorial introduces a pioneering opportunity for collaboration aimed at developing a standardised approach to skin health and wound care across social care services. By fostering consistency, improving data capture, and strengthening transformative partnerships across the health and care system, we can ensure that individuals in social care receive the attention and the high-quality, coordinated support they deserve. ●

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