

Care Home Support System: providing tissue viability advice in the independent sector

Specialist tissue viability nursing support in the UK is generally inadequate to meet the needs of people in care homes. Inspection agencies rightly use their country's legal acts and regulations along with care standards guidance as the basis for their assessments. Access to educational and clinical support on tissue viability will become increasingly important to ensure these standards are met. An initiative by Wounds UK in association with ConvaTec Ltd, the Care Home Support System (CHSS), aims to provide an affordable tissue viability education and includes materials for nurses and care assistants, tools to help managers, and web-based clinical support.

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KEY WORDS

Care homes
Tissue viability
Skills and standards
Legal requirements
Care Home Support System

Tissue viability services for independent care homes are being provided on an ad hoc basis which is leaving residents with inadequate care. Although there are some exceptions, in general tissue viability nurses (TVNs) across the UK are not resourced sufficiently and may not be mandated in their job descriptions to provide adequate specialist cover to care homes over and above their NHS responsibilities.

What ends up happening is that TVNs, realising that there is a need for specialist support often do what they can where they can. This is a crisis interventionist approach targeted at the prevention of admission or the facilitation of early discharge from hospital, rather than providing a full

service that would be appropriate for people living in care homes.

There are a number of reasons why the NHS would benefit from improved tissue viability services to care homes. The continuing expansion of the ageing population with increasing dependency levels,

high hospital occupancy rates which act as a deterrent to admissions, costs to PCTs of emergency admissions and pressure for early discharge irrespective of the presence of complex wounds, are just a few. From the point of view of the care homes, regulation and inspection issues as well as complaints and the potential

Table 1

Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 no. 114 — sections relevant to skin and wound care (adapted from a presentation by Joyce O'Hare presented at the CHSS launch)

Paragraph	Providers shall...
4 (1) (a)	make proper provision for the health and welfare of service users
4 (2)	make such arrangements...for the provision to service users of adequate services from any healthcare professional
4 (d)	have appropriate procedures for the control of infection and the management of clinical waste
5 (1)	...prepare a written plan...which sets out how the service user's health and welfare needs are to be met
5 (2) (c)	...where appropriate...revise the plan
12 (b)	provide other such equipment for the general use of service users as is suitable and sufficient having regard to their health and personal care needs
13 (a)	ensure that persons employed in the provision of the care service receive...suitable training to the work they are to perform
13 (c) (i)	having regard to...the number and needs of the service users...ensure that at all times suitably qualified and competent persons are working in the care service in such numbers as appropriate for the health and welfare of service users

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Table 2

Standards of care relating to care homes in the four UK countries

Country and regulatory body	Acts	Regulations	Care Standards
Scotland Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (The Care Commission) www.carecommission.com/index.php	Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2001/20010008.htm	Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 No 114: The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2002/20020114.htm	National Care Standards: Care Homes for Older People revised March 2005 www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37432/0010384.pdf
England Commission for Social Care Inspection www.csci.org.uk/	The Care Standards Act 2000 www.csci.org.uk/professional/care_providers/all_services/acts.aspx Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/20030043.htm	Care Homes Regulations 2001 www.csci.org.uk/professional/care_providers/all_services/regulations.aspx	Care Homes for Older People: National Minimum Standards and The Care Homes Regulations 2001 www.csci.org.uk/professional/care_providers/all_services/national_minimum_standards.aspx
Wales Care and Social Services Inspectorate (Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales) www.csiw.wales.gov.uk/index.asp	The Care Standards Act 2000 www.csci.org.uk/professional/care_providers/all_services/acts.aspx	Welsh Statutory Instrument 2002 No 324 (W37): Care Homes (Wales) Regulations 2002 www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2002/20020324e.htm Welsh Statutory Instrument 2003 No 947 (W.128) Care Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2003 www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2003/20030947e.htm Welsh Statutory Instrument 2003 No 1004 (W144) Care Homes (Wales) (Amendment No 2) Regulations 2003 www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2003/20031004e.htm	National Minimum Standards for Care Homes for Older people (2004) Supplementary guidance for older people with dementia (2003) www.csiw.wales.gov.uk/docs/old_person_dementia_guide_e.pdf
Northern Ireland The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority www.rqia.org.uk/home/index.cfm	The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hpss_qi_regulations.pdf	Statutory Rule 2005 No. 160 The Nursing Homes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 www.opsi.gov.uk/Sr/sr2005/20050160.htm Statutory Rule 2005 No. 161 The Residential Care Homes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 www.opsi.gov.uk/Sr/sr2005/20050161.htm	Minimum Care Standards (under development — see document The Quality Standards for Health and Social Care: Supporting Good Governance and best practice in HPSS 2006 www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/qpi_quality_standards_for_health_social_care.pdf

Table 3

Registration of social service workers

Country	Body
Scotland	Scottish Social Services Council www.sssc.uk.com
England	General Social Care Council www.gsc.org.uk
Wales	Care Council for Wales www.ccwales.org.uk
Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Social Care Council www.niscc.info

for litigation provide some important incentives to equip staff to deliver quality skin and wound care, and to help managers to demonstrate compliance with good clinical governance.

On the 6th September 2007 the first pilot phase of the Care Home Support System (CHSS), a package of educational, clinical and managerial back-up, was launched to a Scottish audience of more than 100 care home professionals in Glasgow. The development of the Wounds UK

CHSS package was in response to this very real need for provision of tissue viability assistance to be extended to the vulnerable elderly population in care homes.

The relevant legislation in Scotland is 'The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001' from which flows the enforceable regulations in 'Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 number 114' (Table 1). In Scotland the document 'National Care Standards Care Homes for Older People revised 2005' provides further guidance but

Table 4

Care Home Support System contents

<p>Education – hard copy materials</p>	<p>Training CDs x10 for registered nurses Title presentation, some contain practical demonstrations, relevant PDF articles: The skin — its management and care (including emollient application demo) Wound assessment and dressing selection Understanding and managing necrosis and slough Understanding and managing infection (including aseptic technique and taking a swab demos) Understanding and managing exudate Pain assessment and control Pressure ulcers – prevention, recognition and management (including 30° tilt) Leg ulcers and chronic oedema (including doppler ABPI, pulse oximetry and leg exercise demos) Minor trauma, burns and surgical wounds Common dermatological conditions and infections</p>	<p>Training CDs for Care Assistants Some contain practical demonstrations, relevant PDF articles: Skin assessment and management (including emollient application demo) Pressure ulcers (including 30° tilt) Positioning clients in beds and chairs (including seating assessment) Nutrition and wounds Introductory wound management (including aseptic technique) Pocket guides x 3 for Registered Nurses (10 sets provided) Skin care, Pressure ulcers, Wound dressings Pocket guides x 3 for Care Assistants (10 sets provided) Skin care, Pressure ulcers, Wound dressings Wall charts Assess, identify and position Dressing choice and referral pathway</p>
<p>Education — events</p>	<p>Free places for Care Home staff at regionally based study days</p>	
<p>Education — website (all items in this section are free to download as often as required)</p>	<p>Books Download chapter by chapter: Compression therapy in practice Trauma and pain in wound care A pocket guide to clinical decision-making in wound management Essential wound management: An introduction for undergraduates Wound healing: A systematic approach to advanced wound healing and management Skin care in wound management: assessment, prevention and treatment Honey: A modern wound management product Articles Arranged for download under topic headings All articles from <i>Wound Essentials</i> Distance learning package An introduction to Applied Wound Management</p>	<p>Best Practice Statements Care of the older person's skin Minimizing pain and trauma at dressing change Compression hosiery Journal Supplements Applied Wound Management Applied Wound Management part 2 Clinical Tools Pocket guides (same as hard copies provided, supplied for extra copy download) Wall charts (as hard copies plus a web-only poster: The language of wounds) e-tutorial website discussion forum to support RNs signed up for distance learning cohorts</p>
<p>RN support — website</p>	<p>Discussion forum specifically for RNs General discussion forum for inter-home communication (also open to care assistants) One-to-one zone for correspondence with Wounds UK clinical staff (also open to care assistants)</p>	
<p>Management support — website (all items in this section are free to download)</p>	<p>Policies – example policies for adoption or adaption Prevention and treatment of pressure ulceration Care of open wounds Policy audit compliance tools Prevention and treatment of pressure ulceration audit chart Care of open wounds audit chart Dressing choice audit chart</p>	<p>Pressure care equipment needs analysis and stock check tool Incidence and prevalence data gathering spreadsheets Care Home acquired spreadsheets Out of Home acquired spreadsheets Wounds skin damage and swellings spreadsheets Discussion forum specifically for managers General discussion forum for inter-home communication One-to-one zone – for private questions for Wounds UK clinical staff</p>
<p>Management support</p>	<p>Expert witness support – support with responding to complaints or litigation (x1 annually)</p>	
<p>Other support/ functionality</p>	<p>Club Wounds UK Communal Care Home subscription Access to all the materials on the Wounds UK website plus <i>Wounds UK Journal</i> delivered quarterly</p>	<p>My Reading List create your own online reading list from the CHSS site materials Web access User names and passwords allow access from any computer</p>

is not enforceable by law. Standard 5 is relevant to tissue viability and mentions the need to have sufficient skills in the workforce, training and development and using best practice guidance. Standard 6 relates to special furniture and equipment, standard 13 nutrition, standard 14 encompasses assessment and management of symptoms including pain. In addition standard 15 on medication could be considered to cover dressings and wound therapies. The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (known as The Care Commission) uses all of these documents in its inspectorial duties. The main difference between Scottish Care Standards documents and those relating to tissue viability in Wales and England is the specific citing of requirements concerning pressure ulceration in the English and Welsh versions.

Legislation, regulations and care standards for the different UK countries are listed in *Table 2*. Care Homes are encouraged to go beyond these minimum standards to supply good quality care and make a positive impact on the lives of service users.

Registration of social care workers is being processed in Scotland with the body responsible being the Scottish Social Services Council. Its aims are listed on its website: 'The SSSC is responsible for registering people who work in social services in Scotland and regulating their education and training. Our role is to increase the protection of people who use social services, to raise standards of practice and to increase public confidence in the sector' (SSSC, 2007a). The register opened on 1st April 2003 with a two-phase plan to register 138,000 social care workers (SSSC 2007b). In phase 1 registration opened for managers of care homes services for adults in January 2006. Phase 2 includes supervisors in adult residential care, which began in September 2007, to be followed by practitioners in adult residential care in January 2009, and support workers in adult residential

care in April 2009. Registered nurses in Scotland working in care homes will not have to dual register with the SSSC. The SSSC's regulatory function is mirrored in organisations in the other UK countries (*Table 3*). Registration for care home staff is not yet mandatory but is expected to gradually spread to all UK countries in the next few years. Each registration body has codes of practice for both employers and employees and these are central to the registration process.

Registration requires relevant education and training or a commitment to achieve specified levels before it is time to re-register. In Scotland re-registration every three years will require evidence of post-registration training and learning (PRTL).

CHSS

Against this backdrop of increasingly vulnerable service users, regulation and registration there is now a demonstrable need for specialist support in tissue viability for the care home sector. The provision of service is likely to come from a variety of providers both public and private. Wounds UK in association with ConvaTec Ltd have developed an integrated package to meet the sector's needs. The package comprises three main elements: a set of educational materials; an e-clinic; and management support tools, using some hard copy materials together with an interactive website. *Table 4* sets out the detail of the package contents for managers, registered nurses and care assistants.

The cost for the system will be per care home per year. The package materials are currently being finalised and it is hoped that the system will be available before the end of 2007.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the CHSS will go some way to meeting the demand for tissue viability support in care homes and the need to improve skills for care home workers. **WUK**

Key Points

- ▶▶ Tissue viability (TV) support to care homes in the UK is under-resourced.
- ▶▶ TV support would benefit older people by improving quality of wound care within their homes, the NHS by preventing admission and facilitating early discharge, and keep care homes consistent with regulation and inspection guidance.
- ▶▶ An initiative in the final stages of development which aims to provide an affordable service is The Care Home Support System (CHSS) from Wounds UK in association with ConvaTec Ltd which had its preliminary launch in September 2007.
- ▶▶ The CHSS contains educational elements for nurses and care assistants, management support materials and an e-clinic for referral of patients with complex and non-healing wounds.

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