



Mewn partneriaeth â
Llywodraeth Cymru
In Partnership with
Welsh Government



Health and Safety Guidance for Social Care Employers

For the Social Care Sector in Wales

Developed by the Social Care Workforce Partnership, this guidance is intended for social care providers to adopt and adapt for use within their own organisations.

To: All Employers in Health and Social Care

Subject: Health and Safety Guidance for Social Care Employers

Dear Colleagues,

The Social Care Workforce Partnership Group made up of representatives from trade unions, social care employers and Welsh Government has developed the attached guidance template to support safe working practices across the social care sector.

Why this guidance matters:

Social care workers face unique risks, including manual handling, infection control, lone working, and increasing violence and aggression.

This guidance provides clear practical steps to help employers meet their legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and related regulations.

It promotes a consistent approach to risk assessment, training and incident reporting, ensuring that staff can deliver high-quality care without compromising their own safety.

Our shared commitment:

To create workplaces where safety is a priority for every employee and service user.

To adopt a zero-tolerance approach to violence and aggression, protecting staff from harm.

To work collaboratively, employers and unions together, to maintain and improve health and safety standards.

We encourage you to review the guidance template and integrate it into your policies and procedures and business risks. By doing so, we can collectively uphold the highest standards of care and safety for all. This guidance template should be taken in conjunction with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance available at: [Prepare a health and safety policy: How to write your policy - HSE](#)

Thank you for your continued commitment to the wellbeing of your workforce and those they care for.

The Social Care Workforce Partnership Group.

Health and Safety and the Law

The law says that every business/organisation must have a policy for managing health and safety where they employ five or more people. Even when this threshold is not met, it is good practice to do so and sets the tone for health and safety in workplace culture.

A health and safety policy sets out your general approach to health and safety. It explains how you, as an employer, will manage health and safety in your business. It should clearly say who does what, when and how.

You must share the policy, and any changes to it, with your employees and any recognised trade unions.

The legal requirement to write a policy is included in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 explain the steps you must take to manage health and safety. [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

Layout:

Part 1: Statement of intent

State your general policy on health and safety at work, including your commitment to managing health and safety and your aims. As the employer or most senior person in the company, you should sign it and review it regularly.

Part 2: Responsibilities for health and safety

List the names, positions and roles of the people in your business who have specific responsibility for health and safety.

Part 3: Arrangements for health and safety

Give details of the practical arrangements you have in place, showing how you will achieve your health and safety policy aims. This could include, for example, doing a risk assessment, training employees and using safety signs or equipment.

Further information is available at: [Health and safety basics for your business](#) or [Keeping everyone safe - Health and safety at work - Acas](#)

Guidance Template

(Company Logo)

Statement of Intent

Foreword from [Employer Name]

At [Employer Name], we believe that every worker in health and social care deserves a safe, supportive and respectful working environment. Health and safety is not just a legal requirement; it is a fundamental right. Social care workers provide vital care to some of the most vulnerable people in society and they should never have to compromise their own wellbeing to do so.

This policy reflects our commitment to protecting workers from harm, whether that means reducing risks from manual handling, preventing exposure to hazardous substances, or addressing the growing concern of violence and aggression in care settings. We know that these challenges are real and often faced daily by our staff.

Together, with our trade union partners, we will continue to campaign on these issues. This will ensure:

- Robust risk assessments and safe staffing levels.
- Training and resources that empower workers to stay safe whilst at work.
- Zero tolerance for violence and abuse against staff.
- Mental health support for those affected by stress and trauma.
- Ensure worker engagement through the protected lawful status of trades union appointed Health and Safety Representatives and Health and Safety Committees. Link Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regs 1977.

Together, we can create workplaces where care workers feel valued, protected and confident in delivering the highest standards of care. The safety of staff is our priority, always.

Date	Author	Next review

Health and Safety Policy Guidance for Social Care Providers in Wales

Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the commitment of [Organisation Name] to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all employees, service users, and visitors within social care settings. It applies to all staff, contractors, and volunteers.

It should be noted that the guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) represents the minimum requirement from employers with regards to promoting Health & Safety (H&S) in the workplace. In producing H&S guidance, employers should make every effort to follow the HSE Approved Codes of Practice (ACoP) as means of direction with guidance and information drafting. The HSE ACoPs can be found here: [Legal reference - HSE](#)

Legal Framework

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 2002
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulation 12)
- Fire Safety Order 2005
- Equality Act 2010

*THIS LIST IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE

Responsibilities For Health and Safety

Role	Responsibilities
Employer	Provide safe premises, equipment, training, and supervision. Consult and Engage with the workforce
Managers	Conduct risk assessments, monitor compliance, and investigate incidents.
Employees	Follow safety procedures, report hazards, and attend training.

Further information on the dividing the responsibilities of health and safety within your organisation is available here: [Appoint a competent person - HSE](#)

The competent person at XX is XX

A list of individuals with specific responsibilities should be developed to ensure that health and safety is managed day to day and is an agenda item at meetings throughout the organisation. All roles should be included in these discussions through speaking to colleagues and their trade unions.

Principles for Reporting

For the purpose of good health and safety practice, all staff should be encouraged to report any incident(s) which they experience or are made aware of. **Under no circumstances should staff face punitive action or detriment for the reporting of any health and safety concerns.** ACAS offers clear guidance on this: [Protection from dismissal and detriment - Health and safety at work - Acas](#)

Staff should be encouraged to report any incidents and hazards (potential or actual) immediately. These can be raised with the following:

- Immediate Line Manager/Supervisor.
- Appointed Competent People.
- Trade Union H&S Representative(s).

Following reporting of a H&S concern to one or more of the above roles, an incident report form should be filed. Any outstanding risk assessments should also be updated or if the risk had previously not been identified, a new risk assessment should be created.

Any updates to working practices following a H&S report should be communicated clearly with all employees, including consultation with staff and their representatives where necessary.

Any incidents of a criminal nature should be reported to the police and supportive organisations where staff have been the victim(s) of abuse, harassment or violence.

More information and guidance on reporting a risk or incident can be found here: [Reporting a risk - Health and safety at work - Acas](#) and [Tell us about a health and safety issue - Contact HSE](#).

Trade Union H&S Representatives

Health & Safety (H&S) Representatives are employees which have either been elected by the workforce or appointed by a trade union. Their role is to be an independent scrutineer of management and represent the concerns of the workforce on health and safety matters.

Trade union H&S Representatives are entitled in law to:

- Represent employees through consultation on internal H&S matters.
- Represent employees when consulted by HSE Inspectors or Local Authority Officers.
- Inspect the workplace and investigate any accidents, near misses or potential hazards (actual and arising). Inspections should occur every 3 months as a minimum.
- Conduct risk assessments.
- Investigate any H&S related complaints.
- Request in writing that an employer is to establish a Health & Safety Committee (this requires the support of at least one other appointed representative).
- Attend H&S meetings and forums.
- Present investigation findings to the employer for action and resolution.
- Attend union-approved training without loss of pay.
- Receive paid time off work to undertake their duties – undertaking inspections and consulting with employees.

More information about the Trade Union H&S Representatives can be found here: [Health and safety representatives - HSE](#) and [What is a union safety representative? | TUC](#)

Steps for Employers

The following is an example protocol for partnership working and engagement with trade union H&S representatives:

1. Establish Communication
 - a. Ensure that trade union H&S representatives are known and regular dialogue is maintained through the H&S Committee.

- b. Liaise frequently and swiftly on any H&S concerns which arise (or could potentially arise) in the workplace.
- 2. Investigation Participation
 - a. Ensure that trade union H&S representatives are fully involved and included in any workplace investigation and/or consultation.
 - b. Allow for paid time off substantive duties to participate fully in any and all investigation processes, including representing other employees.
 - c. Ensure that trade union H&S representatives have access to any and all relevant documentation along with complete access to all necessary workplace sites.
- 3. Learning, Development and Action Planning
 - a. Ensuring trade union H&S representatives are afforded paid time off to become fully trained and time to become well versed in the latest legislation.
 - b. Working in partnership with representatives to formulate and update risk assessments and policies.
- 4. H&S Committee
 - a. Ensuring that a committee is established.
 - b. Ensuring trade union representatives are invited for participation in the committee.

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Arrangements for Health and Safety

Detailed Day-to-Day Hazards

- Handling bodily fluids and waste – follow infection control protocols.
- Medication administration errors – adhere to MAR charts and double-check procedures.
- Aggressive behaviour – implement de-escalation and safe exit strategies.
- Stress and fatigue – ensure regular breaks and access to mental health support.
- Environmental hazards – maintain clear walkways and proper lighting.

Infection Control Guidance

- Hand hygiene before and after each client interaction.
- Use PPE (gloves, masks, aprons) as per risk assessment.
- Regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
- Isolation protocols for contagious illnesses.

Medication Safety

- Follow MAR charts for all medication administration.
- Double-check medication and dosage before giving.
- Store medication securely and according to guidelines.
- Report and document any medication errors immediately.

Mental Health Support

- Access to Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP).
- Stress management workshops.
- Confidential counselling services.
- Peer support groups.
- Canopi
- Effective supervisions

Violence and Aggression Management

- Training in de-escalation techniques.
- Use of personal alarms and lone worker protocols.
- Clear reporting and support after incidents.

Risk assessments for all service users with known aggressive behaviour.

Emergency Procedures

- Fire evacuation plans and drills (this needs to be developed in its own specific policy).
- First aid provision and reporting.
- Medical emergency protocols.
- Safeguarding procedures.

Training and Competence

- Mandatory induction on health and safety.
- Regular refresher training on manual handling, medication administration, infection control, and violence prevention.
- Specialist training for high-risk tasks.
- The appointment of competent people for the purpose of meeting the health and safety legal requirements of the workplace. See here: [Appoint a competent person - HSE](#)
- Commitment to ensuring timely CPD and accredited training for all employees.
- Trade Union H&S Representative Training (see above section).

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Arrangements for Health and Safety

Risk Assessment

Training

Consultation

Emergency Evacuation

Appendices

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment Template

Hazard	Risk Level	Control Measures	Responsible Person/Policy	Date

Appendix 2: Incident Report Form

Date & Time	
Location	
Description of Incident	
Persons Involved	
Immediate Action Taken	
Reported By	

Further information on reporting incidents is available here: [Report accidents and illness - Health and safety basics for your business](#)

Appendix 3: Lone Working Checklist

- Inform manager of location and expected return time.
- Carry charged mobile phone and personal alarm.
- Check risk assessment for client before visit.
- Emergency contact numbers are accessible.
- Report back after visit.

Appendix 4: PPE Guidance Summary

- Gloves – for personal care and cleaning tasks.
- Masks – when risk of airborne infection exists.
- Aprons – during personal care or cleaning.
- Eye protection – if splashing risk present.

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Appendix 5: Zero Tolerance Statement on Violence and Aggression in Social Care

We, the undersigned, affirm our shared commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment for all staff, service users, and visitors within social care settings. Violence, aggression, harassment, and abuse: whether physical, verbal, or psychological: will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Our pledge:

Zero tolerance for any form of violence or aggression towards staff.
Immediate action to protect employees and service users when incidents occur.
Clear reporting procedures and support for affected staff.
Training and resources to prevent and manage challenging behaviour.
Collaboration between employers, trade unions, and staff to maintain safe workplaces.

Everyone has the right to work without fear. Together, we will uphold this principle and take all necessary steps to ensure safety and dignity for those who provide and receive care.

Signed by:

Appendix 6: Examples of Practical Elements for Risk Elimination in Social Care

1. Eliminate Hazards at Source

Remove unnecessary risks: Replace hazardous cleaning chemicals with safer alternatives; eliminate trip hazards by securing cables and maintaining clear walkways.

Design out risks: Use height-adjustable beds and hoists to avoid manual lifting; install anti-slip flooring in bathrooms and kitchens.

2. Substitute Safer Methods

Replace manual handling with mechanical aids (hoists, transfer boards).

Use pre-measured medication packs to reduce handling errors.

Switch to digital records to avoid paper clutter and reduce fire risk.

3. Engineering Controls

Install physical barriers or secure rooms for high-risk service users.

Fit automatic door closers and controlled access systems.

Ensure adequate ventilation to reduce infection risk.

4. Administrative Controls

Comprehensive risk assessments for each service user and environment.

Clear protocols for lone working, violence prevention, and emergency response.

Rotas and staffing levels to avoid fatigue and stress-related incidents.

Incident reporting systems for continuous improvement.

5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Provide appropriate PPE (gloves, masks, aprons) for infection control, and other tasks where required.

Ensure training on correct use and disposal of PPE.

Maintain stock levels and easy access.

6. Violence and Aggression Prevention

Zero tolerance policy signed by employers and unions.

Behaviour risk assessments for service users with known aggression.

De-escalation training and personal alarms for staff.

Post-incident support and counselling.

7. Continuous Monitoring

Regular safety audits and environmental checks.

Feedback loops from staff to identify emerging risks.

Annual policy review or after significant incidents.

Regular health and safety training/training plans.

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