

Ethical Decision Making for Adult Social Care

We and wider health and care workforces are faced with difficult decisions every day. We need to remember now more than ever the ethical values and principles that underpin our work in Adult Social Care in order to guide our planning and support our judgements.

8 key principles to ensure we consider while we navigate each day:

RESPECT: *recognising that every person and their human rights, personal choices, safety and dignity matters.*

We show respect by:

- Asking about and listening to people's views
- Keeping people informed
- Respecting people's personal choice, ensuring we have given them relevant information
- When someone lacks capacity we ensure that decisions are made in their best interests
- Support people to receive what they are entitled to. In a time of reduced resources, we ensure that there is a fair judgement and clear justification for decisions around prioritisation

REASONABLENESS: *decisions are rational, fair, practical, and grounded in appropriate processes, available evidence and a clear justification.*

We show reasonableness by:

- Ensuring decisions made are practical with a reasonable chance of succeeding
- Using all available information to inform decisions, ensuring contributions from others are carefully considered, and taking into account risks and benefits
- Considering alternative options and ways of thinking, being conscious of diverse views from cultures and communities
- Being clear and fair in decision making, taking into account the context and timing

MINIMISING HARM: *reduce harm (physical, psychological, social, economic) to people and communities due to the outbreak. Supporting all to cope with and recover to their best ability.*

We strive to minimise harm by:

- Showing that everyone plays a part in minimising the spread, in practicing thorough hand-washing and social distancing
- Regularly and accurately updating communities and organisations
- Sharing learning about the best way to treat and respond to the outbreak
- Enabling care workers and volunteers to make informed decisions which support vulnerable people

INCLUSIVENESS: *help others to understand situations, be included in decisions that affect them, and offer their views and challenge. Decisions and actions should aim to minimise inequalities as much as possible.*

We are inclusive in our practice through:

- Involving people in planning for their care and treatment, within the context of community
- Involving families and carers in planning and decisions, ensuring that no relevant person or group is excluded from making decisions
- Considering where decisions may be detrimental to people or groups
- Communicating with all, through differing and appropriate techniques
- Transparency and clear justification when it is decided to treat a person or group in a different manner than others, showing why it is fair to do so

ACCOUNTABILITY: *holding people including ourselves to account for decisions; being transparent about why decisions are made and who is responsible for making and communicating them.*

We are accountable in our practice through:

- Using our responsibilities and duties towards those we work with to act and deliver their aims
- Adhering to official guidance, statutory duties, and professional regulations at the time
- Transparency around decision making, sound justification and accurate/timely recording
- Supporting others to take responsibility for their decisions and actions

FLEXIBILITY: *being responsive, able, and willing to adapt when faced with changed or new circumstances, to facilitate agile and collaborative working.*

We are flexible in our practice through:

- Responding and adapting to changes as and when they occur e.g. if there is new information or changed levels of demand
- Ensuring that plans and policy can be flexible and innovative as needed
- Giving people opportunity to challenge decisions that affect them, in the time that is available
- Ensuring that the health and care workforce is supported to work collaboratively across disciplines and organisations, as agile and resilient as possible
- Reviewing organisational practices, standard approaches and contractual arrangements that may limit flexibility

PROPORTIONALITY: *providing support that is proportional to needs and abilities of people, communities and staff, making proportionate responses to the benefits and risks identified.*

We are proportionate in our practice by:

- Assisting people with care and support needs to the extent we possibly can
- Acting on statutory or special responsibilities, taking note of any duties that might be amended as the outbreak develops
- Providing support for those who have extra or new responsibilities to care for others
- Providing support for those taking increased risks or facing increased burdens, while attempting to minimise these as far as possible

- Providing appropriate support and communications to staff experiencing unexpected or new pressures

COMMUNITY: *a commitment to get through the outbreak together by supporting one another and strengthening our communities to the best of our ability.*

Everyone involved will have a role to play in the response to the outbreak and will be affected in one way or another, and therefore should:

- Work with and support one another to plan for, respond to, and cope with the outbreak
- Support our networks and communities to strengthen their response and meet needs that arise, by helping and caring for neighbours, friends and family
- Be conscious of own behaviour and decisions, and how this may impact on others
- Share learning from own experiences that may help others

There are no absolute answers to making the correct or most ethical decisions. Each principle must be considered as much as possible in the context of each circumstance with appropriate risk management and considerations of individual wellbeing, overall public good, and available information and resources.

Read more at *Responding to COVID-19: the ethical framework for adult social care*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ethical-framework-for-adult-social-care/responding-to-covid-19-the-ethical-framework-for-adult-social-care>