

Implementing NICE and SIGN guidelines in care homes

This bulletin sets out recommendations for keeping up-to-date with current evidence-based national guidance and gives advice on dissemination, implementation and review to ensure a high standard of care.

Key recommendations

- Have a system in place for becoming aware of new guidance that has been published. This may involve signing up to receive regular updates or scheduling regular time to proactively look for new guidance.
- Assess published guidance to determine if it is relevant to care home staff and requires dissemination to make sure everyone is aware of it.
- Talk to your team about new and updated guidance and how to put it into practice.
- Have a discussion with your staff about whether the recommendations require any change to current practice.
- Identify key partners involved in implementing the guidance, for example the GP, community pharmacist, social services or local Integrated Care Teams (ICs) and engage them in the process, if useful.
- Use audits to determine whether current practice is in-line with guideline recommendations. This is particularly important if there is a suspicion that current practice is falling short of what is outlined by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) or Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN).
- Develop an action plan where improvements are necessary. This may include training and education and then an assessment of competency.
- Re-audit, where appropriate, to ensure that standards of practice have improved to the required level, compared with the initial audit results (the baseline).
- Hold refresher education and training sessions and re-assessment of competency as necessary, to ensure that targets are being met and the guidance is being put into practice, in order to maintain a high standard of safety and care.

There are multiple clinical guidelines and quality standards applicable to care homes published by NICE and SIGN. NICE guidelines are applicable in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.¹ In Scotland, evidence-based guidelines are produced by SIGN.²

Implementing NICE and SIGN guidance can help health and social care professionals to ensure the care they provide is based on the best evidence available. They can also ensure they consider guidance when making clinical decisions and/ or meet standards set by regulatory bodies. Using guidelines can empower all staff dealing with patient queries to have confidence in their approach to care and they can effectively target resources and efforts at the areas that offer the most significant health improvement.^{2,3}

An audit is a good way to assess baseline current practice against guideline recommendations and determine whether any changes are required.

Re-audit is useful to ensure changes have been implemented and standards of practice have improved.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) uses NICE guidelines as evidence to inform their inspection process in England.⁴

Summary

Having a system in place for keeping abreast of NICE and SIGN guidance that has been published is important for the care home sector to ensure staff are keeping up-to-date and implementing information and key standards that are relevant to their role. This will help to ensure the same high standard of care is delivered across the board and that care is delivered using an evidence-based approach.

References

1. NICE. Factsheet 5: Helping to put NICE recommendations into practice (implementation). A guide for patients and carers. March 2013. <https://www.nice.org.uk/media/default/About/NICE-Communities/Public-involvement/Developing-NICE-guidance/Factsheet-5-contribute-to-developing-clinical-guidelines.pdf>
2. SIGN. What we do <https://www.sign.ac.uk/what-we-do/> Last accessed 06/04/22.
3. NICE. Benefits of implementing NICE guidance. <https://www.nice.org.uk/about/what-we-do/into-practice/benefits-of-implementing-nice-guidance> Last accessed 06/04/2022.
4. Care Quality Commission. NICE and CQC release updated joint working agreement. 20 May 2021. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/news/stories/nice-cqc-release-updated-joint-working-agreement>

Additional resources available	 Bulletin	https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-305-implementing-nice-and-sign-guidelines-in-care-homes/
	 Tools	

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