Emergency Health Care Plans: What are they? How to write one and how to use it!

Advance Care Planning and use of Emergency Health Care Plans (EHCPs) is now common-place in care home settings across Newcastle and Gateshead. But, do they actually work and would you know how to use one or who to contact in an emergency?

Care Plans have to be meaningful to be effective and should include multidisciplinary input. The intention is to make communication easier in the event of a healthcare emergency.

Developing an EHCP includes preliminary discussions to ascertain the understanding and expectations of the individual, their partner, parents (for children) and relatives. This may include informing them of foreseeable potential emergencies that could be planned for. It is a process, and may take several conversations and even several drafts of the EHCP.

If the individual has capacity for these decisions: the discussion is one of shared decision making. If the individual wishes, this may include the parents (for children), partner or relatives. If the individual lacks capacity for these decisions: any decisions must be made following the checklist of the Mental Capacity Act: see form MCA 1 & 2 on www.necn.nhs.uk/common-themes/deciding-right/resources/

The plan should include:
- A brief summary of the individual’s diagnosis/es and their understanding of it
- Important medicines information e.g. any allergies

The plan should indicate:
- Any care limitations that have been requested by the patient
- Any care limitations recommended by healthcare professionals

The plan should describe actions for foreseeable and potential emergencies which may be related to a single underlying diagnosis, or to a general failing in health and the following needs to be considered:
- What is the possible emergency?
- How will the individual and care staff recognise it is happening?
- Are there any emergencies for which urgent help should be called immediately?
- What actions should the attending care staff take?
- Are there any first aid steps that should be taken e.g. rescue medication, distraction?
- How long should staff persist with first aid before asking for professional help?
- Any transfer of care information that should be shared in the event of hospital admission e.g. DNACPR

Care Home Staff should:
- Agree a place to store the EHCPs
- Ensure all relevant healthcare professionals and organisations are aware that a plan is in place
- Ensure the EHCP transfers with the resident between care settings

#CareHomesMatter
**Enhanced Health for Care Homes Framework [NHSE 2016]**

**Care Element 2:**

MDT team support including coordinated health and social care

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**Dr Richard J Croft**  
General Practitioner, Cruddas Park Surgery and NHS Newcastle Gateshead CCG Clinical Lead for Older People

Having enjoyed his medical training at the University of Glasgow, Richard returned to his hometown of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1995 where he has been a GP Partner at Cruddas Park Surgery since 1999. He has an interest in workforce development and has been a GP Trainer since 2008 and from a clinical perspective; his passion is the care of older people. In 2012 Richard took up the role of NHS Newcastle Gateshead CCG Clinical Lead for Older People where the main focus of his work has been Newcastle Care Homes Programme. As a GP Richard is the Link GP to Lea Green Court Care Home where he says the staff and residents have been his education.

richardcroft@nhs.net

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**Christine McGorie**  
Social Work Teams Manager, Newcastle City Council

Christine is currently based at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle upon Tyne. Her main forte in the social work field is supporting the care of older people which she has been involved with since 2006. Since 2010 Christine has been qualified as a Best Interest Assessor [BIA] and signatory for Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Team. Christine informs this role is of great interest to her as she is passionate when older people experience physical or cognitive decline, that they continue to be shown respect and for their voice to be heard.

christine.mcgorie@newcastle.gov.uk

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**TOP TIPS**

- Know which of your residents have an EHCP
- Know where to find each resident’s EHCP
- Incorporate new EHCPs into staff handovers so that the whole team are aware of the content
- Make a point of discussing EHCPs with GPs and other community health staff so as to be clear about what to do and who to contact in an emergency
- Remember the EHCP is NOT a legally-binding document
- Remember having an EHCP is NOT a barrier to accessing appropriate hospital care

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**RESOURCES**

[www.necn.nhs.uk/common-themes/deciding-right/resources/](http://www.necn.nhs.uk/common-themes/deciding-right/resources/)
[www.necn.nhs.uk/common-themes/end-of-life-care/educational-resources-for-professionals/](http://www.necn.nhs.uk/common-themes/end-of-life-care/educational-resources-for-professionals/)