

Falls in Care Home Settings and Reporting

Falls and the consequences of falls can significantly impact a person's wellbeing, mobility and confidence. In Scotland, falls are a major and growing concern for older people, their families and carers as well as health and social care providers.

Older people living in care homes are three times more likely to fall than older people living in their own homes, with the results of these falls often being more serious. Many factors can contribute to this heightened risk, such as physical frailty, the presence of long-term conditions, physical inactivity, taking multiple medications and the unfamiliarity of new surroundings. However, in many cases taking the right steps at the right time can actively support an individual and reduce the risk of falls and harm from falls (Care Inspectorate, 2016)

Over the last few years, there has been much work done, nationally and locally within South Ayrshire, to support care homes for older people to make improvements in this area of care. More people than ever understand and acknowledge that the risk of and harm from falls can be successfully managed. Key ingredients for success have been identified, such as strong leadership, working more closely with the local health and social care team, collecting and analysing falls data and having adequate resources.

What is a fall?

A fall is defined as an unintentional or unexpected loss of balance resulting in coming to rest on the floor, the ground or an object below knee level (National Institute for Clinical Excellence, 2014).

Where can it happen?

A fall can occur anywhere i.e. in an adult's own home, external environment or in a health care setting.

Why does this matter?

- Falls can be associated with physical and psychological harm.
- They can sometimes increase an adult's length of stay in a care setting.
- They can occur if an adult's health and social care needs are not being met (avoidable harm).
- They can also occur even when an adult's health and social care needs are being met (unavoidable harm).

When is a fall an ASP referral?

It can be difficult to answer this question. Each case requires careful consideration based on the individual circumstance alongside the use of professional judgement.

Agencies should have their own ASP policies in place, and the following guidance should be considered alongside these.

ASP is everyone's business. The Act places a duty on public bodies where they **know or believe** an adult is an "adult at risk" of harm and action needs to be taken to protect them from harm, to make a referral by reporting the facts and circumstance of the case to the council for the area the person is located (ASP Code of Practice 2022).

All falls must be reported and recorded using your agencies procedures, but not all falls will require an ASP referral.

The referrer will need to consider whether the adult is an adult at risk of harm and whether there was harm linked to the fall. The assessment should include:

- Injuries sustained as a result of the fall.
- Information related to previous falls.
- Safeguards in place to mitigate the fall.
- Clear analysis of the adult's ability to safeguard themselves from falling.
- Was the fall managed in line with local policy and procedures?
- Action taken following the fall (e.g. medical intervention, contact with the adult/family).

Where there is doubt as to whether to raise an ASP referral, staff should speak with their line manager and if further advice is required consult with the South Ayrshire Care Home review team, Care Home Link Social Worker or the residents allocated Social Worker.

Local Reporting

A Short life Working Group was established regarding the development of a fall's pathway, which included: Care Home managers/Seniors, Care at Home Practitioners, Day Care Practitioner, Occupational Therapy, SAHASCP Contracts and Commissioning, Scottish Care, and Social Work. The sole purpose of this group was to look at the reporting of falls to the local authority and agree pathways for reporting.

Although this guidance includes a reporting Matrix to support Local Care Home Providers, falls, and the reporting of falls, has become an area of concern and to

support this we have produced information below to support good practice reporting, out with the reporting Matrix.

Examples of falls where an ASP referral (AP1) should be considered, if you know or believe an adult is at risk of harm. The list is NOT exhaustive:

- A fall resulting in physical injury
- A fall as a result of safety equipment not in working order, used incorrectly, not being used as required or not in place following an assessment of need, causing harm.
- A fall resulting in harm where there is no risk assessment in place or where the risk assessment has not been reviewed or updated to mitigate the falls risk.
- Repeated falls despite preventative advice being given or measures put in place to mitigate, and a series of injuries has occurred, or falls guidance not followed.
- Fall and injury as a result of medication mismanagement.
- Members of staff not receiving falls management training and/or not adhering to the falls policy and protocols following a fall.
- Supervision levels/safe staffing levels have fallen below the legal requirements.
- Environmental hazards, such as poor lighting or clutter, resulting in falls.
- Medical intervention not sought or given appropriately after a fall.

Reporting of falls that DOES NOT meet the 3-point criteria:

As discussed previously, older people living in care homes are three times more likely to fall than older people living in their own homes. Within South Ayrshire the reporting of all falls is important to allow for continuous assessment, support and management of falls to reduce the risk of harm to adults.

If an adult within a care home experiences a fall with no Injury and does not meet the 3-point criteria for an ASP referral, this should still be reported as soon as practically possible to the South Ayrshire Care Home Review Team via telephone or email on the details below:

Telephone Number: 01292 319272,

Email: carehomereviewteam@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

When reporting falls, we ask that you provide the following details:

- Summary of the falls (or incident reporting form)
- What steps, if any, have been put in place by yourself to reduce risk of falls
- Who has the fall been reported to, Family, POA, Care Inspectorate
- Confirm Care Home falls risk assessment been update and when

If in doubt as to what referral should be submitted, please contact the Care Home Review Team who can provide support.