


# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

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## 1. Policy Statement

In May 2008, Ivan Lewis, the Minister for Care, announced the introduction of seven "Core Principles to Support Self Care", with the objective of helping health and social care staff to support people who wish to remain independent. **The Core Principles**, which were developed by Skills for Care and Skills for Health, are as follows:

- a) *Ensure that individuals are able to make informed choices to manage their own care needs.*
- b) *Communicate effectively to enable individuals to assess their needs, and develop and gain confidence in self-care.*
- c) *Support and enable individuals to access appropriate information to manage their self-care needs.*
- d) *Support and enable individuals to develop skills in self-care.*
- e) *Support and enable individuals to use technology to support self-care.*
- f) *Advise individuals how to access support networks and participate in the planning, development and evaluation of services.*
- g) *Support and enable risk management and risk taking to maximise independence and choice.*

This organisation seeks to ensure that these principles are appropriately reflected in their policies and practice in promoting autonomy and independence. This document outlines the policy of this organisation in relation to promoting its residents' autonomy and independence.

### Definition:

- i. **Autonomy is the right or condition of self - government.**
- ii. **Independence is self - determination, self - reliance, and self - support.**

## 2. The Policy

This organisation seeks positively to promote the autonomy and independence of our residents. We recognise that the capacity for independent action of our residents has often been undermined by illness, disability and failing mental capacity and that insensitive action by workers can reinforce dependence. We therefore, strive to help residents make their own decisions and to support them in controlling their own lives. We aim always to balance the protection of residents from unnecessary risks with the promotion of independence and choice, in accordance with Department of Health guidance: *'Independence, Choice and Risk: a guide to best practice in supported decision making.'*

### a) Care Needs Assessment

We recognise that the tone of the relationship between this organisation and a resident is often set by the initial contact and that the care needs assessment or pre-admission assessment, which must be undertaken before we start to provide a service, can in itself be a process that endangers a potential resident's sense of being in control. We do everything we can to empower our residents from the very outset of our dealing with them.

### b) Information

Making users aware of what is going on in their care is an important contributor to them feeling independent. We therefore, provide good, thorough and up-to-date information about our service and other facilities, both at the beginning and throughout our contact with a resident. We would provide information in formats and languages which make it accessible to the individuals to whom it is addressed.

### c) Choice

We recognise that choice is important for residents and we attempt to advance these principles throughout our operations. We ensure that every resident who receives our service has positively opted to use our organisation. We provide residents with the opportunity to exercise choice about the workers with whom they interact and will change the worker when the resident requests it. We are particularly sensitive to matching workers and residents where issues of gender, culture or ethnicity play a role.

**d) Care and Support Workers**

- i. The workers providing care and support on a day-to-day basis aim to carry out their tasks in co-operation with residents in ways that do not deny the possibility for the resident to exercise their own discretion, initiative and control.
- ii. We realise that this principle is particularly difficult to uphold where residents have disabilities or lack of capacity is an issue.
- iii. *We value risks as an essential part of a fulfilling lifestyle. Workers support residents in taking reasonable risks, without obviously endangering their health or safety, and subject to a thorough risk assessment recorded in the Care Plan.*
- iv. We know how disempowering it can be for residents not to understand fully what is going on. Wherever possible, workers communicate with residents in their first or preferred language.

**e) Personal Files**

We provide facilities for residents to see their personal files in accordance with the *Data Protection Act 1998* and inform them of the access to files which may be required by inspectors.

**f) Limitations to a Resident's Chosen Lifestyle or Human Rights**

Although we try to respect the lifestyle choices of residents, in exceptional circumstances we may be obliged to intervene to prevent a resident from harming themselves or becoming a danger to someone else. On these rare occasions, our workers will act with respect for human rights, within our legal responsibilities and this organisation's policy on restraint and in the best interests of the resident and others closely involved.

**g) Residents who Lack Mental Capacity**

- i. We continue to respect the rights of residents who have been assessed as lacking capacity to make certain decisions, or, who are thought to lack that capacity, by considering their best interests at all times.
- ii. We do this by ensuring that we implement fully the *Mental Capacity Act 2005* Code of Practice.
- iii. In relation to maintaining resident's autonomy and independence. This entails involving them as fully as possible in every decision concerning their care and the services this organisation provides.

**h) Dealing with Residents' Relatives and Carers**

We try to relate to residents' relatives and carers where this is appropriate, treating them as partners in providing care. To ensure that such relationships do not undermine the autonomy of the resident, however, we insist on having the resident's permission before dealing with anyone on their behalf or releasing confidential information to others.

**i) Advocacy**

We provide information when requested about the availability of independent advocates and self-advocacy schemes, and are quite willing if required to communicate with residents' advocates.

**3. Training statement**

Training is provided to ensure that all staff promote the principles of independence and self-determination for all our residents.

**Related Policies**

*Advocacy  
Assessment of Need and Eligibility  
Care Planning and Support  
Dignity and Respect  
Mental Capacity Act 2005  
Relatives Friends and Carers*