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Supporting staff through uncertainty and change



Helps teams and leaders reduce pressure during change, reform and unclear situations.



Reflection statements



7.1

Staff are given clear, timely and practical information during change, including what is known, what is not yet known and where to go for updates.



7.2

Workers are consulted about how change, reform, funding limits, service changes or new processes may be affecting workload, role clarity, communication or client interactions.



A Conversation Starter Pack for Aged Care

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When change creates pressure

Change is a normal and necessary part of aged care. Change itself is not automatically a psychosocial hazard. The risk often comes from how change is planned, communicated, supported and implemented. Change and uncertainty can create psychosocial pressure when workers are expected to keep delivering care, answering questions and supporting clients and families while systems, services or information are still changing.

In aged care and community care, workers may be navigating reform, changing programs, funding limits, reassessments, service changes, new processes or unclear communication. Uncertainty cannot always be removed, but organisations can reduce the pressure workers are left to carry by providing clear communication, practical guidance, support and safe pathways for questions or escalation.

How uncertainty can show up in aged care

Uncertainty can create pressure when workers are repeatedly expected to manage unclear, changing or emotionally charged situations without enough information, support or control. Recognising how uncertainty shows up in everyday work can help teams and leaders respond earlier, provide clearer support and reduce the risk of harm.

How uncertainty can show up in aged care

No clear information
to give clients
or families.

Asked to explain
decisions, delays or
limits they did
not make.

Supporting people
who are distressed,
angry or frightened
about change.

Unclear about
what is changing,
when, or what
it means.

Receiving inconsistent
messages from different
parts of the organisation
or system.



Feeling caught between
client needs, family
expectations and
service limits.

Expected to keep
absorbing pressure
while formal decisions
are delayed.

Unsure what to
document, escalate
or hand over.

Feeling pressure
to reassure others
without clear
answers.

Carrying client or
family distress from
one conversation to
the next.



**The way change is communicated, supported and managed
can reduce or increase psychosocial risk.**



Reducing the pressure workers are left to carry

Organisations and leaders can reduce psychosocial risk during change by strengthening the systems, communication and support around workers. This is especially important when workers are expected to respond to client or family questions, explain service limits, manage distress, or continue delivering care while decisions are still being made. Clear communication does not mean having every answer immediately. It means giving workers the best available information, updating them regularly, and being honest about what is known, what is not yet known, and what may change. Regular updates can reduce confusion and help workers feel less exposed when speaking with clients, families or colleagues.

Clear guidance for workers

Clear communication guides, key messages and escalation pathways help workers respond consistently without carrying pressure alone.



What they can say



What not to promise



What and when to escalate



What to document



What to hand over or follow up

Extra support where pressure is highest

Leaders should pay attention to workers or teams most exposed to uncertainty, distress, blame or repeated pressure, and provide additional support.



Exposure to distress or blame



Repeated uncertainty or questions



Regular check-ins



Opportunities to debrief



Clearer role boundaries

Reducing pressure also means creating regular spaces for questions, reflection and feedback. Workers should be consulted about where change is creating confusion, pressure or risk, and organisations should review whether existing supports are reducing the pressure workers are carrying. Good communication does not remove all uncertainty, but it can reduce the amount of uncertainty workers are left to hold alone.

What this should prompt

When change or uncertainty is creating repeated pressure, organisations should look at how the change is being communicated, supported and implemented. This may include reviewing staff guidance, communication processes, escalation pathways, supervision, debriefing, documentation and consultation with workers. The aim is not for workers to have every answer. The aim is for workers to be clear, supported and not left to carry uncertainty alone.

This resource is a starting point for noticing patterns and prompting review. It does not replace work health and safety advice, psychosocial risk assessment, supervision, consultation, training or organisational processes.