



palliAGED Aged Care Standards Insight

August 2019

Person centred, Patient centred, Consumer directed care! Does it matter?

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Aged care in Australia is being reformed. This reform has been guided by policy directions relating to ageing in place, consumer directed care (CDC) and market based competition.

Recent reforms have led to a system that operates within a single framework and a single set of aged care quality standards. Consumer experience is now part of how aged care providers are being assessed against these standards and a Charter of Aged Care Rights describes the older person's rights as a consumer of Australian Government funded aged care services. But where did CDC come from?

Consumer directed care was introduced for all home care packages in July 2015. Home care packages are designed to help people who want to stay living at home for as long as possible. CDC provides people who receive home care with greater control over the care and services package they receive, including how it is delivered and who provides it. Home care packages and CDC represent a new approach to care that meets the needs of aged care consumers wanting to remain at home.

At the same time as this new service model was introduced, the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency started a conversation with the aged care community about what is meant by quality in aged care.

This conversation highlighted many things including the pressures of increasing demand, Australia's diverse population, the central role of choice and flexibility, and the different perspectives on quality and function. While no single definition of quality emerged, there was agreement around the need to *ensure consumer safety, choice and flexibility, with consumers being treated with dignity and respect. These were highlighted as central platforms for a quality framework for aged care and the delivery of services within it* p20¹.

Consumer directed care also reflects the gradual process of reshaping how the individual is viewed in health and social systems. It is a shift in thinking about the person receiving the care. In person-centred practices, the person is not a passive recipient of best practice care but an active

participant in making decisions about their own health.

Previous health care models have seen the health care professional in the central role evaluating symptoms and complaints, prescribing treatments, and assessing outcomes².

Person-centred care looks at the whole person, not just their health problem, while person-directed care goes further and puts the person in the centre and in control of decisions about their care³. Although both approaches aim to increase the amount of control that older people have over their lives, the person-directed approach provides older people with greater autonomy.

Initial investigation of CDC in action in community care services found that Australians want choice and flexibility in aged care and that both consumers and providers are supportive of this new way of doing business⁴.

While there is some consumer uncertainty about how it all works as the system transforms, the benefits of choice seem to definitely outweigh the risks. So CDC will continue to shape aged care reform and sit firmly in the heart of the Aged Care Quality Standards.

References:

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