



Deterioration & Health Changes

AGED CARE POLICY

Policy Version 2.1

Category: Administrative *(Required by Legislation)*

Adopted: December 2024



Deterioration & Health Changes Aged Care Policy

Purpose

Winton Shire Council partners with staff and the consumer and / or their representative/s to identify changes in the consumer's health. The types of action taken are to:

- In the case of consumer loss of function including clinical, cognitive, or mental alteration; support for reablement will be provided wherever possible. While this is not always possible, liaison with the consumer and / or their representative/s to alert them to any possible loss of function will occur
- Provide a higher level of ongoing care and services to meet the consumer's changed needs in consultation with the consumer and / or their representative/s
- Strive to avoid further complications in the consumer's condition
- Decide what to do if their condition deteriorates or there is a change in their mental health, cognitive or physical function, capacity, or condition
- Respond promptly to these changes in an effective and inclusive manner
- Talk to the consumer and / or representative/s about advance care directives.

The earlier deterioration is identified and prompt and effective action is taken, the better the consumer outcome. It may also reduce the level of intervention required.

Consumers will experience different illness pathways depending on the primary diagnosis and presence of other diseases (co-morbidities). There are three common pathways:

- Short period of evident decline
- Long-term limitations with intermittent serious episodes
- Prolonged dwindling

Across all these pathways it is important to identify and respond appropriately to deterioration of the consumer caused by their primary diagnosis or as a result of other disease or events. However, it is important to distinguish between deterioration due to untreatable causes, such as disease progression or an acute or medical emergency that may warrant review and treatment.

Good clinical assessment, nursing review, consultation with the consumer's GP, and if needed, external experts such as specialist palliative care is critical.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all categories of employees
- Winton Shire Council
- all volunteers
- contractors and consultants, whether or not they are employees
- all other service providers



Definitions

Term	What it means / refers to
Advance care directive	This is sometimes also referred to as a “living will.” Forms and requirements for writing advance care directives vary between states and territories. An advance care directive can include one or more of the following: - the person preferred to be their substitute decision-maker - details of what is important to them, such as their values, life goals and preferred outcomes - the treatments and care the person would like or would refuse if they had a life-threatening illness or injury
Advance care planning	Advance care planning is the process of planning for an individual’s current and future health care. It involves talking about the individual’s values, beliefs and preferences with their loved ones and doctors. This helps them make decisions about the individual’s care when the individual can’t. Ideally these conversations start when the person is well and then continue throughout their life. It can be particularly important if an individual has: - an advanced chronic illness - a life-limiting illness - a risk of dementia or a related illness The advanced care plan can be formalised through an advance care directive
Aged Care Quality Standards	According to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission: Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect in aged care. The Aged Care Quality Standards define what good care looks like.
Community Care services	A broad term to describe a collection of services and health care that are packaged up to meet the unique needs of each individual in their own home, rather than in a hospital or care home.
Consumer	A person who receives approved services from a service provider.
Long-term limitations with intermittent serious episodes	Consumers will have gradual decline in function. During each acute episode, the consumer is at risk of dying but may not, however function will continue to decline
Prolonged dwindling	The consumer has a long-term progressive disability and reduction in function. Death may follow infections, falls or fractures
Short period of evident decline	Consumers may have good function for a long period followed by a few weeks or months of rapid decline prior to death

Policy statement

Winton Shire Council commits to providing care that:



- Fits with the goals and choices of the consumer and / or their representative/s if consent given by the consumer
- Supports the consumer's day to day function, their activity and participation in the community
- Responds to any change or deterioration in the consumer's health or wellbeing in accordance with their needs, goals, and preferences
- Understands who will be involved in decisions about care and services, especially deterioration or change in the consumer's health
- Alerts the consumer's nominated representative if the consumer's condition deteriorates unexpectedly, to discuss their previous choices in these circumstances.
- Ensures staff involved in the delivery of care are aware of the consumer's preferences.
- Makes sure the consumer and / or representative/s know they can be involved in decisions about their care and services as much as they choose to be

Process Guidance

Through the actions and activities below, Winton Shire Council demonstrates how consumers get care and that is right for them:

- Create a safe and effective support plan and care plans for each consumer
- Make sure the care plans helps identify any deterioration of the consumer's mental health, cognitive or physical capacity or condition and take appropriate action
- Discuss advance care planning with the consumer and / or their representative as soon as possible
- Ask the consumer if they wish to have a nominated representative notified if they deteriorate and who this would be
- Staff report any changes in a consumer's condition to their supervisor
- Notify the consumer's representative of the deterioration (with the consumer's prior consent)
- Educate staff on how to identify and respond to changes in consumer's needs. This could include looking for signs such as: loss of appetite, increasing unsteadiness and falls, changes in consciousness and consumer comments about feeling frailer or weak.
- Support consumers to engage with appropriate clinical, medical, and other services as relevant for management of their care.

It is noted that it is not currently within scope for Winton Shire Council staff to deliver direct clinical services.

Operational need

To ensure Winton Shire Council delivers safe and effective personal care, in accordance with the consumer's needs, goals and preferences to optimise health and well-being.

To deliver against the consumer outcome of

"I get personal care, clinical care, or both personal care and clinical care, that is safe and right for me."

in accordance with the Aged Care Quality Standards.



Roles and responsibilities

Winton Shire Council

Winton Shire Council is responsible for providing leadership and fostering a culture that treats all individuals with dignity and respect and keeps them free from abuse, encourages the reporting of known or suspected instances of abuse and responds appropriately. Council will identify appropriate systems and processes to monitor, review and continuously improve this policy.

Management

Management is responsible for ensuring the workforce (whether employed or contracted) follow this policy and take all appropriate action to prevent and respond to deterioration and health changes

Management is also responsible for monitoring, implementation and compliance with this policy including ensuring completion of education and training, providing feedback and performance review where required.

All staff including volunteers and contractors

All staff, contractors, students, and volunteers are responsible for understanding and following this policy and completing education and training as directed.

Communication

This document will be published on the Winton Shire Council website and will be made available to all employees involved in the delivery of Aged Care services provided by Winton Shire Council.

Related Council documentation

Aged care records including:

- Consumer files,
- Incident reports,
- Incident register,
- Consumer feedback,
- Worker training records and
- Consumer Risk Management Plan,
- Tools and resources used

Legislation, recognised Authorities and other sources

- Charter of Aged Care Rights (Australian Government Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission) [Link](#)
- Aged Care Standards [Link](#)
 - Regulation: Standard 8 (3)(d) Risk management
- Emergency Care Institute – Aged Care Emergency Model of Care [Link](#)
- National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards
 - Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration Standard [Link](#)



- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
 - Essential Elements for Safe High Quality End of Life Care [Link](#)
 - Recognising and Responding to Deterioration in a Person's Mental State [Link](#)
 - Recognising and Responding to Acute Physiological Deterioration [Link](#)

Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years or when legislation or standards change and remains in force until amended or repealed by resolution of Council.

Record of amendments and adoptions

Date	Version	Reason for amendment	Date adopted by Council
December 2021	1.0	Initial policy	16 December 2021
November 2024	2.0	SDAP review	19 December 2024
February 2025	2.1	Update to Operational need	19 December 2024

