

Good Practice Guidance I: Central Alerting System (CAS) alerts in Care Homes

Key Points

- The implementation of CAS alerts is vital to ensure that care home resident's safety is maintained to national standards.
- To ensure that a care home is signed up to receive all of the Central Alerting System (CAS) alerts, the care home will need to register for the system. The care home will then receive emails notifying them of new alerts.
- It is important to ensure that the email address used for the CAS alerts is one that can be accessed via a number of staff members. However, information governance and data protection requirements must be adhered to.
- Care homes should have a system to ensure emails are checked regularly, alerts are logged, screened for relevance, an action plan is developed when necessary, information is disseminated to staff and actions completed are documented.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has issued guidance about compliance with the Health and Social Care Act 2008. Their registration system focuses on services meeting essential standards of quality and safety. This system is focused on outcomes, including the views and experiences of people who use the service. The implementation of CAS alerts is vital to ensure that care home resident's safety is maintained to national standards.

Outcome 9 is based around the management of medicines and includes the experiences that service users should expect including things such as having their medicines at the times they are needed, in a safe way and having information about their medicines. Providers will be expected to handle medicines safely, securely and appropriately; ensure that medicines are prescribed and given by people safely and follow published guidance about how to use medicines safely.

Outcome 4 of the guidance, care and welfare of people who use services, makes it clear that it is a care home's responsibility to ensure that:

- medical device alerts issued by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA),

- patient safety alerts,
- rapid response reports and
- patient safety recommendations issued by the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA)

which require action are acted upon within required timescales.

To ensure that a care home is signed up to receive all of the Central Alerting System (CAS) alerts, the care home will need to register for the system. The care home will receive emails notifying them of new alerts.

Email safetyalerts@dh.gsi.gov.uk with the:

- name of the organisation
- first and last name of the recipient to receive the alert
- job title
- full postal address
- telephone
- email address
- fax number where available

The care home will receive a welcome email from the CAS system within 5 working days. If you do not received the welcome email contact the CAS helpdesk on 020 7972 1500.

It is important to ensure that the email address used for the CAS alerts is one that can be access via a number of people, however information governance and data protection requirements must be adhered to. This is to ensure that if one person is on annual leave, off sick etc these alerts can still be accessed and actioned within the required timescales.

The CAS alerts include safety information about medicines and appliances as well as feedback from the National Reporting and Learning Service that enables healthcare professionals to learn from incidents. Access to the website is via; <https://www.cas.dh.gov.uk/Home.aspx> and a log-in is not required simply to read the alerts. Approximately 4-5 alerts are sent per month. The CAS website has an interactive help tool which will guide new users round the website – it can be found under the “help” button

Once a care home has signed up for the CAS alert system it would be advisable to set up a system within your home whereby:

- Someone is responsible for checking for CAS alerts at least daily
- Alerts are logged
- They are then screened for relevance to the care home setting – if the alert is not relevant this should be documented in the log
- An action plan is developed where necessary
- Information is disseminated to all staff

- Actions completed (if any) are documented

There have been many NPSA alerts issued over the last few years and some of these are still directly relevant to care homes without nursing and/or care homes with nursing and so the CAS website and NPSA website form an invaluable resource for patient safety.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has also developed a section of its website designed specifically for care home staff; <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Healthcareproviders/Carehomestaff/index.htm>. It includes guidance, safety alerts, and links to educational material to assist staff in the safe use and management of the wide range of medicines and medical devices used in care homes.

Further Information

- Further information on managing medicines in care homes is available in Outcome 9 and further information on care and welfare of people who use services in Outcome 4 of the [CQC Essential Standards of Quality and Safety](#).
- The Central Alert System website contains important information on alerts and urgent patient safety specific guidance to be accessed; <https://www.cas.dh.gov.uk/Home.aspx>
- The National Patient Safety Agency also contains safety alerts related to medicines; <http://npsa.nhs.uk/>
- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) care home section of its website: <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Healthcareproviders/Carehomestaff/index.htm>
- Further information on [The handling of medicines in Social Care](#) can also be found on the Royal Pharmaceutical Society website: www.rpharms.com
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) provides guidance and [advice on a number of topics](#) which is available on their website; www.nmc-uk.org

The above links are made available solely to indicate their potential usefulness to users. The user must use their own judgment to determine the accuracy and relevance of the information they contain.

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