

# Definition and Competencies for Key Worker Function

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The aim of this paper is to provide a high level definition for Key worker function and competencies.

## **Key Worker Definition**

The key worker function should be an integral part of the role of all relevant Health and Social Care Professionals. The individual who assumes the key worker function will be a member of the patients multidisciplinary team, responsible alongside other team members, for planning and co-ordinating patient care across interfaces, including within and between care teams and care settings. The aim of the role is to ensure communication and co-ordination to ensure maximal quality of life in the last year of life and support the person to remain in their preferred place of care.

## **Key Worker Function**

The key worker should be identified and recorded when it is recognised that the patient has palliative care needs and is placed on the palliative care register. This decision should be discussed and agreed as part of the multidisciplinary approach, respecting patient preference and considering continuity of care. This role should be transferable between members of the multidisciplinary team depending on the different stages of the illness.

Although it is recognised that in many areas, patients are already allocated a key worker to ensure consistency and equity of care, each Health and Social Care provider will need to consider how palliative care key worker function is allocated, and how it may be transferred depending on the needs of the patient/carers.

## **Role and Responsibilities**

It is anticipated that the role and responsibilities within the key worker function should include the following:

- Act as a main contact for patient/carer
- Facilitate decision making and end of life care planning, taking into consideration who is the best person to do this.
- Ensure the appropriate communication/discussions take place at the patient's pace to allow them to have an active and informed role in their care planning.
- Providing information and guidance to other professionals relating to the patient and their carer.
- Co-ordinate assessments, referrals and multidisciplinary team care planning
- Ensure that assessment, review and update of care plans takes place so that symptoms are managed and physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are met
- Co-ordinate and share information within and between primary, community and secondary care services.
- Ensure that systems and processes are in place to ensure handover of information on a 24 hour basis to all relevant services
- Ensure family and carers are aware of who to contact on a 24/7 basis for advice and support.
- Ensuring that the carer/significant others needs have been assessed ( e.g. Carer assessment)
- Ensure that families and carers are supported as necessary including what symptoms and signs to look out for and how these should be managed.
- Ensure that the Care of the Dying pathway is appropriately implemented.
- Co-ordinating bereavement follow up

## **Core Competencies**

The key worker should be competent in the following areas<sup>1</sup>:

- Overarching values and knowledge of Palliative and End of life Care
- Effective and appropriate communication.
- Awareness of the roles and responsibilities of all related professionals/services
- Co-ordination of systems and processes on a 24 hour basis.
- Holistic assessment and care planning
- Symptom management, maintaining comfort and well being
- Co-ordinate end of life care planning

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<sup>1</sup> Palliative & End of Life Care Competency Assessment Tool 2011