



# Emergency Medicines Training for Agency Staff during the Pandemic - January 2021

The scenario below is a true account of a current situation. We have published the advice below to assist others in a similar situation.

## Current situation:

- Home Manager and senior staff self-isolating with Covid
- A number of residents with Covid
- 30% of staff with Covid
- Limited staff trained to administer medicines
- Agency staff taken on to assist

## Issues:

- No management team in the home
- No evidence of medicines training completed by agency staff
- Agency staff not familiar with the residents
- Only one existing member of staff medicines-trained for day shift
- Only one existing member of staff medicines-trained for night shift

## Considerations:

- ➔ Need to train and competency assess agency staff
- ➔ Need to ensure agency staff are familiar with the residents and their needs
- ➔ Need to upskill existing staff
- ➔ Need to decide which existing staff to select to be trained
- ➔ Need to designate and train a senior staff member (plus contingency cover) to oversee the medicines management process e.g. ordering and ensuring continuity of supply of medicines
- ➔ Need to achieve the above:
  - within a short / urgent timescale
  - in a Covid-safe manner
  - in line with Government guidance

## Actions to take:

- 1 Train all agency staff immediately to administer medicines using the [Safe Handling of Medicines Foundation Course e-learning programme](#) (Also available as virtual learning with a Pharmacist trainer for larger groups).
- 2 Assess competency of the agency staff using the [Foundation Online Competency Assessment for Care Homes](#)
- 3 Familiarise the agency staff with the residents e.g.
  - a) Familiarisation using photos on MAR sheets/EMAR, actual name of the resident and what they prefer to be known as
  - b) Familiarisation with their care plan and the details contained in it
  - c) Familiarisation to deliver person-centred care
  - d) Consider the best way for existing regular staff to assist agency staff



## BE AWARE OF THE PITFALLS



E.g. asking regular care staff to assist the agency worker by joining them on the medicines round to identify the resident may result in secondary dispensing and unacceptable procedures (2 people administering the medicine, doing half the job each) which may result in errors.



Ensure the care plans and MAR sheet photos are up to date



Ensure agency staff are familiar with the storage arrangements and key security for the medicines



Ensure agency staff are familiar with the systems and processes you use e.g. original packs, EMARS, blister packs etc.

4

Select existing staff to be medicines-trained. Considerations include:

- a) Basic literacy and language skills
- b) If they are willing, keen and interested
- c) If they are familiar with the residents / home
- d) If they are familiar with the care plans

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Upskill existing staff using the [Safe Handling of Medicines Foundation](#) training course by e-learning or virtual learning.

6

Assess competency of the newly medicines-trained existing staff using the [Online Competency Assessment for Care Homes](#)

7

Train a senior person to take responsibility for the medicines management processes using the [Competency Assessment, Auditing and Managing Medication for Adult Services: An Advanced Distance Learning Workbook & Resource Pack](#)

8

Train another senior person as contingency cover in case of illness or the person is off-shift.

**The designated senior person is to provide advice, guidance and authority to medicines-trained existing and agency staff and is integral to the success of safe and effective medicines administration.**

9

Ensure all agency and existing staff are aware of who to contact for support, help and advice around medicines.

10

Make sure both agency and existing staff are aware of the home's policy and procedures. Ensure your policy is clear and easily accessible for all staff – especially where you are relying on a large number of agency staff.

## CONTACT US:

 0333 939 0053 [info@opuspharmserve.com](mailto:info@opuspharmserve.com) [www.opuspharmserve.com](http://www.opuspharmserve.com)