



Fife Council Social Care Services

**Duty of Candour
Annual Report
1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025**

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Background

All Health and Social Care Services in Scotland have a duty of candour. This duty applies to any care services provided by the local authority, independent providers, and the NHS. The duty of candour applies when unintended or unexpected events happen that result in death or harm as defined in the Act, the people affected understand what has happened, receive an apology, and that organisations learn how to improve in future. All services provided by the local authority that relate to the care of adults, children, or those in justice services, are subject to this duty. An important part of this duty is that an annual report is provided by Fife Council to outline how the duty of candour is implemented in our services.

About Fife Council

Fife Council is the local authority for the Fife area of Scotland and is the third largest Scottish Council, serving a population of around 371,781. Social Work and Social Care Services are provided in the following areas:

- Adult and Older People Social Work
- Adult and Older People Social Care Services
- Children and Families Social Work
- Children and Families Social Care Services
- Justice Social Work Services
- Early Learning and Child Care Services
- Child Care Services, e.g. child minding
- Very Sheltered Housing Services

The planning of Adult and Older People's Social Work and Social Care Services and Very Sheltered Housing Services, and the policy decisions relating to these services, are the responsibility of the Fife Integration Joint Board. Under the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014, Fife Council have delegated Adult Social Work and Social Care services to the Health and Social Care Partnership. While services are operationally delivered by the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership, Fife Council still retains the responsibility to report on the Duty of Candour incidents that occur in delegated services.

Children's Social Work Services and Justice Social Work Services are retained by Fife Council and delivered via the Communities Directorate whereas Early Learning and Childcare Services are retained by Fife Council and delivered via the Education and Children's Services Directorate.

These services are identified collectively throughout this report as 'Fife Council Social Work and Social Care Services'. This report describes how Fife Council Social Care Services have operated the Duty of Candour during the time between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

Our aim is to provide high quality care and support for every person who uses our services.

How many incidents happened to which the duty of candour applies?

The legislation defines a Duty of Candour incident as **an unintended or unexpected incident that results in death or harm** as defined in the Act and set out in the table below.

If we believe an event may trigger Duty of Candour, we must seek the views of a Registered Health Professional (RHP) to confirm that one of these “harms” has occurred as a result of the unexpected or unintended incident, rather than as a result of the individual’s illness or underlying condition.

Fife Council Social Work and Social Care Services have identified a number of routes for incidents which may trigger the duty of candour, including accidents reported by staff providing services, review of significant occurrences, incidents reported through Adult or Child Protection processes, complaints, or claims received by the Council.

All incidents relating to 2023/24 are now complete.

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, there was one incident where the duty of candour applies within Adult and Older People Social Work or Social Care Services. No other Fife Council Social Work or Social Care services reported any duty of candour incidents in this period.

Type of unexpected or unintended incident (not related to the natural course of someone’s illness or underlying condition)	Number of times this happened (between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025)
A person died	0
A person incurred permanent lessening of bodily, sensory, motor, physiologic or intellectual functions	0
A person’s treatment increased	1
The structure of a person’s body changed	0
A person’s life expectancy shortened	0
A person’s sensory, motor, or intellectual functions was impaired for 28 days or more	0
A person experienced pain or psychological harm for 28 days or more	0
A person needed health treatment in order to prevent them dying	0
A person needed health treatment in order to prevent other injuries as noted above	0
Total	1

In addition to the one case that was confirmed as duty of candour by the registered health professional, a further 7 cases followed the duty of candour process and were

referred to the registered health professional for review and decision. These cases were deemed not to meet the Duty of Candour criteria.

In addition to following the Duty of Candour procedure, all incidents have been subject to accident reporting and investigation procedures as required by Health and Safety and other legislation.

To what extent did Fife Council Social Work and Social Care Services follow the duty of candour procedure?

When we realised the events noted above had happened, we followed the procedure in all cases. This means we informed the people affected, apologised to them, and offered to meet with them. In each case, we reviewed what happened and shared our findings with the individual and/or their family unless the individual or family had specifically stated they did not wish to receive any further information.

Each duty of candour event is reviewed by the service to understand what happened and how we might improve the care we provide in the future. The level of the review depends on the severity of the event, the potential for learning and whether any other accident reporting or investigation procedures have been followed in addition to Duty of Candour.

Any recommendations made are considered in terms of the need to develop improvement actions to meet the recommendations. These are then shared across the relevant service(s) and implemented by local management teams.

Information about our policies and procedures

Fife Council has developed a process map, guidance, and templates for staff to use if they become aware of an incident that triggers the duty of candour. These have been made available to all staff via the Fife Council intranet. Incidents are now logged on the Council's LAGAN system.

Our process has been shared with colleagues in NHS Fife and a generic e-mail address within the NHS Fife clinical and care governance team is used by Fife Council Social Work and Social Care Services when requesting assessment of a duty of candour event by a Registered Health Professional.

All staff providing social work and care services have received briefings on the duty of candour procedure and these are now incorporated into induction processes. Identified staff are also required to complete the e-learning module. In the year 2024/25 a total of 1953 staff completed the e-learning module. This is broken down further into each Directorate as follows:

	Education	Housing	Health & Social Care Partnership	Children & Families/ Justice Services	Others	Total
Number of staff who have undertaken training as at 31.03.2025	96 increased by 42	21 increased by 7	1560 increased by 369	236 increased by 128	40 increased by 17	1953 increased by 563

The table above clearly shows the increase in training from 2023-2024 period and reflects the ongoing promotion of Duty of Candour throughout the services. All senior managers and those with responsibility for ensuring Duty of Candour incidents are flagged up, have completed the training, or will do so as they move into relevant posts.

We know that events that trigger the duty of candour can be distressing for staff as well as the people who receive care. We have support available for staff through our line management structure as well as through the employee counselling service and trade union representatives. Fife Health & Social Care Partnership also have the HSC094 HSCP Traumatic Incident Significant Occurrence guidance which provides Workplace Related Traumatic Incidents Guidance for staff.

What have we learned?

This is the seventh year of reporting and following movement in staff throughout social care services across Fife Council, the Duty of Candour working group has been reconstituted and will sit a minimum of twice per year and more often should the need arise. Caroline Cherry, Principal Social Work Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership will Chair these meetings going forward.

The Duty of Candour working group has met twice since the last Annual Report. The group have worked on a number of things in the background to help Directorates promote Duty of Candour to staff. A Terms of Reference is in place for the group, an intranet page has been designed and is almost ready to go live, a PowerPoint presentation was delivered to the group and this has since been shared for cascade within Directorates. The group has agreed to meet twice yearly to review progress.

We continue to use Microsoft Form to gather the information required for the Annual Report, this continues to be a work in progress that will be reviewed annually.

We recognise that it is vitally important to continue to raise awareness and ensure openness and transparency of communications when incidents happen.

Staff are continuing to review processes with the registered health professional and continuing to ensure sufficient background information is passed on to support the determination of whether an event meets the duty of candour criteria.

In Adult and Older People Social Work or Social Care Services, Older People Resources, the following improvements have been made:

- Risk Assessments – the importance of reviewing and updating risk assessments in a timely manner specifically in relation to a service users' mobility and cognition continues to be discussed, audited by unit managers and enforced regularly at quarterly meetings as part of the regular Duty of Candour agenda item.
- Communication – Evidence from duty of candour reporting highlights communication between colleagues around changing mobility is essential to reduce risks. Unit managers and senior social care workers will ensure all employees are clear on policy and procedure. This will be monitored by Unit Manager audits and communication through team meetings, handovers, training and supervision.
- Staff Breaks – Increased consideration is now being given to scheduling breaks in a way that balances the need to maintain appropriate staffing levels with the needs of the service user and the wellbeing needs of staff.
- Teamwork – There is an opportunity to improve how teams work together to manage reviewing duty of candour learning outcomes. Unit Managers have planned to hold themed sessions and provide a review template to the Team Manager. The themed sessions will generate further improvement actions to be owned by the staff group and reported back through the Health and Safety meetings.

It should be noted even though these learning points are being implemented Duty of Candour incidents are extremely low within the Partnership Care Homes. The Care Homes continue to take a quality assurance approach reporting timeously in line with policy and procedure.

Other information

This is the seventh year of the duty of candour being in operation and it has been a year of further learning, developing, and refining our processes to ensure the organisation is equipped to deal with duty of candour outcomes in line with the legislation.

As required, we have submitted this report to the Care Inspectorate, and we have also placed it on our website.

If you would like more information about this report, please contact us using the following details:

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