

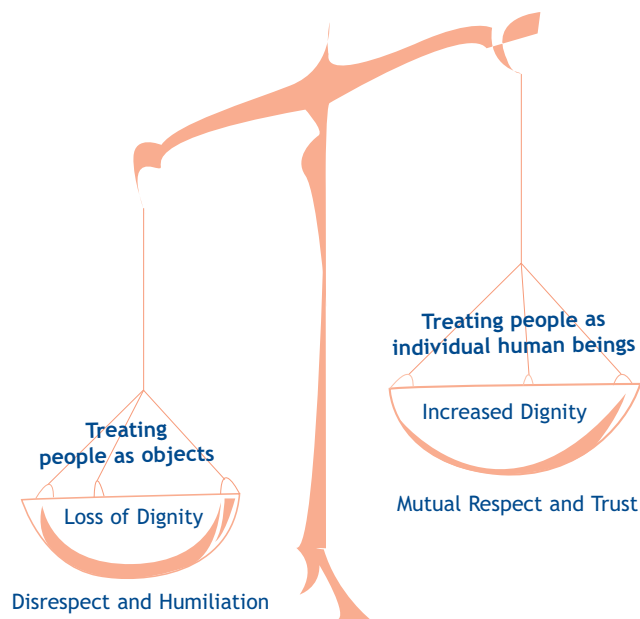
## Human Rights

The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (1948), states: "All human beings are born free, equal in dignity and human rights". Similarly, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) has as its first article 'The dignity of the human person must be respected and protected'. Closer to home, the NHS Plan (2000) stated that 'Health services in partnership with social services and other agencies will need to recognise the specific needs of older people in caring for them, demonstrating proper respect for the autonomy, dignity and privacy of older people'. Yet daily the human rights of older people are violated and ignored in matters as basic as using the toilet.

The core human rights that all health care professionals and workers must recognise are the right to freedom, the **right to respect for one's dignity** and the **right to be treated with equality and fairness**.

All health care professionals and workers have a legal duty to protect patients' Human Rights. (Human Rights Act, (1998)

### The 'Dignity Balance'



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## Behind Closed Doors:

### Using the Toilet in Private

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## Best practice which upholds human rights and promotes dignity

- Toilets are adjacent to patient areas and easily accessible.
- Toilets are clean, well signposted and have doors that close.
- Assessments of toileting needs must include a record of personal choice/preference.
- Whenever possible people should be taken to the toilet.
- If using a hoist ensure modesty by avoiding exposure of body parts.
- Respond to requests for assistance promptly and politely.
- When appropriate pro-active toileting should be adopted.
- When safety may be an issue offer appropriate choices
- On the rare occasions when people have to make use of toilet facilities within the immediate bed area, ensure as much privacy as possible by closing curtains and using a 'PERSONAL CARE IN PROGRESS - DO NOT DISTURB' notice.
- Remove commodes and bedpans as quickly as possible.
- Always offer people facilities for hand-washing and assist when necessary.
- When someone has been incontinent deal with this promptly and discreetly.
- Allowing patients to decide to take a 'reasonable' risk.

## Poor practice which violates human rights and denies dignity

- Ignoring requests for assistance to use the toilet.
- Telling people to wait before using the toilet.
- Telling people to 'use' incontinent pads, instead of being offered appropriate facilities.
- Leaving people who are incontinent wet or soiled.
- Scolding or humiliating incontinent patients
- Insisting that patients use commodes or bed-pans when they could be taken to the toilet.
- Not offering choice.
- Entering closed curtains without ascertaining why they are closed.
- Leaving people on bed-pans and commodes for unnecessary periods of time.
- Not offering people hand washing facilities after using the toilet.
- Leaving patients in full view of others when using toilets.
- Leaving patients on commodes during meal times.
- Using 'safety' as reason to deny choice.