



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte  
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +  
Social Care Professionals

Registrant  
Guidance

# Ensuring Safe and Appropriate Delegation to Assistants in Health and Social Care



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# Why this Guidance is Being Issued



**Assistants play a valuable role in enhancing the delivery of health and social care, contributing to high-quality services amid growing demands and workforce challenges. Their support enables health and social care professionals to fully utilise their expertise and focus on their specialised responsibilities, optimising patient and service user care.**

By ensuring that tasks requiring advanced judgement, profession-specific competencies and clinical skills are performed by appropriately trained and qualified individuals, employers can create a well-balanced team that improves efficiency, enhances patient outcomes, and strengthens the overall health and social care system.

The Health and Social Care Professionals Council is issuing this guidance to ensure that employers take appropriate steps to clarify the responsibilities of registrants who delegate tasks to assistant grades or who are responsible for their supervision. Proper delegation is essential to maintaining high standards of care, ensuring public safety, and preventing complaints arising from inappropriate task allocation. Employers have a responsibility to provide clear direction on what can and cannot be delegated and to ensure that registrants and assistant staff understand their respective roles and responsibilities.

Delegation is a vital component of health and social care practice, particularly in settings where there is a need to distribute tasks effectively across a team to ensure safe and efficient care. However, it is essential that registrants only delegate tasks that are within the skill set and scope of practice of the individual to whom they are delegating. This guidance outlines the responsibilities of registrants when delegating tasks, including a decision-making framework to assist in making sound, ethical, and safe decisions regarding delegation.

In this guidance, the term delegation is used to refer to CORU registrants assigning the responsibility for performing a specific task to a health and social care assistant. Please note that the guidance and examples provided in this document are not intended to reflect the supervision by CORU registrants of new graduates in the health and social care professions or the referral by CORU registrants of service users to other health and social care professionals.

**Using professional titles** correctly is vital to maintaining public trust and ensuring that service users receive care from appropriately qualified and regulated professionals. CORU encourages all practitioners to use their titles accurately and responsibly. Service users should be clearly informed about the roles and responsibilities of assistants, as well as any tasks that are being delegated to them. This transparency is essential to uphold trust and ensure that service users understand who is providing their care.

# Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics

**You may increasingly be required to delegate tasks to, and supervise, those who work in assistant roles, and this guidance is intended to support you in meeting the requirements of the Code when delegating to and supervising the work of those assisting with tasks.**

Remember, that your Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics requires that you must:

- a) acknowledge that service users have the right to assume that the person providing assessment, intervention, treatment or service to them has the knowledge, skills and competence to do so.
- b) only delegate to a person who you believe to have the knowledge, skills, competence, and experience to carry out the task safely and effectively or to a person who is appropriately supervised.
- c) understand that you are accountable for any task you delegate to another practitioner and that you are responsible for any task you delegate to a student or to another person.
- d) understand that if a student or another professional is unwilling to carry out a task because they do not think they are capable of doing so safely and effectively, you must not force them to do so. If their refusal raises a disciplinary or training issue, you must deal with this separately. The service user must never be put at unnecessary risk.

It is also important to highlight that registrants must not:

- a) ask anyone to do anything which is outside their knowledge, skills, competence, and experience unless they are supervised in that task by an experienced practitioner.



# Core Principles of Delegation



## 1. Accountability

The registrant retains responsibility for the task and the outcomes, even if the task is delegated to another individual. As such, registrants must ensure that the person to whom the task is delegated has the competence to perform it safely.

## 2. Scope of Practice

Registrants must only delegate tasks that fall within the scope of practice of the person to whom they are delegating. Tasks that require advanced judgement, profession-specific competencies or clinical skills must not be delegated to individuals who do not have the appropriate training or qualifications.

## 3. Clear Communication

Effective communication is crucial in delegation. Clear instructions should be provided, including expectations, relevant information, and guidelines for completing the task.

## 4. Supervision and Support

When delegating tasks, registrants should provide appropriate levels of supervision based on the complexity of the task and the competence of the person to whom it is delegated.

## 5. Informed Consent

If applicable, ensure that the person to whom the task is delegated is fully informed of their responsibilities and that they agree to take on the task.

## 6. Ethical Practice

Delegation should be done in a manner that upholds ethical standards, ensuring that tasks are allocated fairly and with due consideration to service users' needs.

# Decision-Making Framework for Delegation

The question of whether an activity is appropriate to delegate depends on several factors. The Department of Health of the Victoria State Government in Australia has published a decision-making framework to support health and social care professionals in determining when it is appropriate to delegate a task. It sets out the following questions for their consideration:

## 1. Is the activity suitable to be delegated?

Consideration needs to be given to:

- Nature and complexity of the task
- Service user safety / risk
- Degree of judgement / decision making required for modification of treatment based on service user's response

## 2. Do you have the competence to delegate?

Consideration needs to be given to:

- Your experience in supervising and mentoring
- Your understanding of the competencies required to effectively undertake the task
- Your ability to communicate with and supervise others

## 3. Does the other person have the competence to undertake the activity and are they willing to do so?

Consideration needs to be given to:

- Their education and training
- Their experience
- Their level of skill

## 4. Can the activity be appropriately monitored?

Consideration needs to be given to:

- The level of monitoring required

## 5. Is the specific context of the activity appropriate for delegation?

Consideration needs to be given to:

- The setting the care is being provided in
- The severity and complexity of the service user's condition

If the answer to all of the above questions is yes, then the framework advises that the health and social care professional can proceed to delegate the task. However, if the answer to any of the questions is no, the framework advises that it is not appropriate to delegate the activity.

# Delegation Decision-Making Matrix

The following matrix can also be used as a decision-making tool to help registrants assess whether delegation is appropriate in a given situation. This matrix helps assess the task, the person to whom it is being delegated, and the required supervision and safeguards.

	Task Requires Advanced Judgement or Expertise	Task is Routine or Non-Clinical
<b>Task Risk Level</b>	High risk – requires professional expertise and direct involvement	Low risk – well-defined and routine task
<b>Delegated to Person's Competence</b>	Registered professional with competence in the area	Unregistered personnel or assistant with basic skills
<b>Supervision Level</b>	Close or direct supervision required	Minimal supervision or can be independent
<b>Impact on Service User</b>	High impact – requires clinical skills and oversight	Low impact – routine task with minimal risk
<b>Legal Compliance</b>	Must comply with legal requirements for clinical practice	Must comply with task-specific requirements



Two examples of how the matrix can be applied are provided below.

### Example 1: Administering medication

- **Advanced Judgement:** High, as medication administration requires clinical expertise and knowledge of potential risks.
- **Delegated to Person's Competence:** Should only be delegated to a qualified professional with training in medication administration.
- **Supervision Level:** Direct supervision or clear protocols should be in place for monitoring.
- **Impact on Service User:** High, as improper medication administration could lead to harm.
- **Legal Compliance:** Must comply with relevant professional and regulatory standards for clinical practice.

### Example 2: Preparing the service user's room for treatment

- **Advanced Judgement:** Low, as this is a non-clinical task.
- **Delegated to Person's Competence:** Can be delegated to an unqualified assistant with proper training.
- **Supervision Level:** Minimal supervision needed to ensure the task is completed.
- **Impact on Service User:** Low, as this task does not directly affect service user care.
- **Legal Compliance:** Should follow appropriate health and safety standards and any other legal requirements.



# Key Considerations for Effective Delegation

## 1. Training and Competence

Only delegate tasks to individuals who have received the necessary training, have the required competencies, and are capable of performing the task safely.

## 2. Clear Communication

Ensure that clear, concise instructions are given. The delegated person should understand their role, the task, and any specific guidelines or protocols.

## 3. Ongoing Supervision

Be prepared to provide ongoing support and supervision where needed. The level of supervision should be adjusted according to the person's competence and the complexity of the task.

## 4. Documentation

Keep a record of the task being delegated, the person to whom it was delegated, the level of supervision provided, and any other relevant information. This helps ensure accountability and transparency.

## 5. Review and Reflect

Regularly review the outcomes of delegated tasks to ensure that they have been carried out correctly and safely. Use any learning to improve future delegation practices.

## Conclusion

Delegation is an essential aspect of practice in many health and social care settings. However, it must be approached carefully, with the primary consideration being the safety and well-being of service users. By using a structured decision-making framework and ensuring that tasks are delegated appropriately, registrants can ensure that their practice remains ethical, professional, and compliant with regulatory standards. Always prioritise accountability, clear communication, and adequate supervision when delegating tasks to ensure the highest standards of care are maintained.



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CORU, Foirgneamh Infinity, Cúirt Sheirse, Lána Sheirse, Margadh na Feirme,  
Baile Átha Cliath 7, D07 E98Y.

CORU, Infinity Building, George's Court, George's Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7, D07 E98Y.

Email: [info@coru.ie](mailto:info@coru.ie)    [www.coru.ie](http://www.coru.ie)    [@CORUIreland](https://www.instagram.com/CORUIreland)