

Practice Guide

for Support Practitioners



ELCAP Values

At ELCAP our vision is that everyone, no matter what their individual support needs, can live to their full potential and be an active and valued member of our community.

Our values:



- **We care and keep on caring.**



- **We treat each other with kindness and understanding.**



- **We communicate well.**



- **We are adaptable.**



- **We go the extra mile.**

We deeply value the care, skill and passion ELCAP practitioners bring every day. Your commitment enriches lives and ensure safe, persons centred support.

Qualities of an Excellent Support Practitioner

Compassionate: shows warmth & care.

Respectful: Value the person's identity and preferences.

Patient: Take time, don't rush.

Good Communication: Listening actively, use plain language, pictures, sign or technology.

Adaptability: responding flexibly to changing needs or circumstances.

Empowering: Encourage independence and self-advocacy.
Professionalism: being accountable, ethical and upholding standards.

Teamwork: working collaboratively with colleagues, families and communities.

Reflective Practice: learning from experiences to improve support.



Reflective Daily Practice Checklist



Did I Listen more than spoke?



Did I communicate effectively?



Did I promote choice and independence?



Did I communicate in a way the person understands?



Did I respect the persons dignity and respect?





Did I follow Scottish Standards and ELCAPs policies?

Policy & National Framework

Policy & National Frameworks – What does this mean in Practice?

In Scotland Support Practitioners work within rights-based, person centred frameworks. National policies and legislation are not just documents for managers – they guide everyday practice and decisions. By understanding these frameworks, practitioners can see how values like dignity, choice, respect and inclusion translate into daily practice such as:

- The way we speak to and about people
- How we record incidents or accidents
- How we respond to stress or distress
- The qualities we bring into our support role.

Policy/Framework/Act	What it means in Practice for Support Practitioners
<p>Health & Social Care Standards Health and Social Care Standards: My support, my life</p>	<p>Show Dignity & respect in everyday interactions, check your actions against "I experience" outcomes</p> 
<p>Adult Support & Protection Act</p>	<p>Know what to do if you suspect harm, follow reporting procedures</p>
<p>Adults with Incapacity Act</p>	<p>Understand when decisions need legal support and always maximise independence where possible</p>
<p>The Keys to life Keys to life: implementation framework and priorities 2019-2021 - easy read version - gov.scot</p>	<p>Promote inclusion and independence – support people to make choices about their own lives</p>
<p>Carers (Scotland) Act</p>	<p>Work alongside families and carers, recognising their role</p>
<p>GIRFEC (SHANARRI) Getting It Right For Every Child Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) - gov.scot</p>	<p>Keep Wellbeing at the centre: is the person safe, healthy, nurtured, respected, included?</p> 

Trauma Informed Practice

At ELCAP we're on a journey with CALM Training Ltd. The heart of the course is an understanding of trauma and is the first step in creating sensitive and responsive relationships, services and communities where recovery and equality is possible.

Across ELCAP, we are working towards becoming a Trauma Informed organisation, we are focusing on are written policies and protocols establishing trauma-informed terminology and ensure this embedding in all areas of the organisation.

Importance of Terminology

The words we use shape attitudes and experiences. Using respectful, inclusive language is a vital part of rights-based support.

Why Terminology Matters:

Respect & dignity: Language influences how people are viewed and treated.

Empowerment: Positive words promote self-esteem and independence.



Professionalism: Practitioners must reflect the values in the Health & Social Care Standards.

Consistency: Clear, accurate language supports effective teamwork and record keeping.





Good Practice with Language

Individual who uses services or supported person/individual.

Instead of "Sam is a Service User" 
we would say "Sam is an individual we support". 

Experiencing stress or distress not challenging behaviour.

Instead of "they know what they're doing with this challenging behaviour" 
focus on the underlying communication and needs "they are trying to communicate something important, and we need to understand what that is". 

Understanding Stress and Distress (moving Away from "challenging behaviour")

Traditionally, behaviours such as aggression or self-injury were labelled as "challenging behaviour". At ELCAP this term is now being replaced with **stress and distress** to reflect a more compassionate and trauma informed understanding.

Stress: The emotional or physical strain experienced when a person's needs are unmet or when facing overwhelming demands.

Distress: The visible signs of someone struggling to cope, which may include shouting, withdrawing, pacing or physical expression.

Why move away from “challenging behaviour”?

- It places blame on the person instead of recognising unmet needs.
- It can stigmatise individuals and reduce empathy from practitioners.
- It doesn't acknowledge the role of the environment or systemic barriers.

Supportive Approaches

At ELCAP we adopt Positive Behaviour Support focusing on understanding the meaning behind behaviour, meeting needs and preventing distress. Practitioners will:

1. **Use Trauma Informed Approach** – recognising the past experiences may influence present reactions (links to CALM training)
2. **Look at the function of behaviour** – what is the person trying to communicate?
3. **Provide predictability**, structure, and choice to reduce anxiety.
4. **Prioritise wellbeing** – ensuring the person feel safe, respected and supported.



Practical steps to take when supporting someone in distress:

1. **Stay Calm** – your tone and body language matter, take a deep breath.
2. **Give Space** – reduce demands if needed
3. **Look for triggers** - noise, change, pain, frustration
4. **Offer comfort or reassurance** – in a way that is helpful to the person
5. **Reflect afterwards** – what was this person communicating?
6. **Record and monitor**- seek advice if required.

Accident & Incident Recording

Accident: An unplanned event resulting in injury or harm (e.g. a slip, trip or fall)



Incident: An unplanned event that causes distress, disruption, or potential harm but may not result in physical injury (e.g. verbal aggression, property damage, medication error).

Near Miss: An event that could have caused harm but was prevented or avoided.

Good Recording Principles:

Be objective: write what saw/heard, not opinions

Be specific: Include time, place, people involved, actions taken.

Be neutral: avoid judgemental terms e.g. "aggressive" 
instead "shouted loudly and waved arms" 

Include: **Who, What, Where, When** and **how** events occurred

- **Stick to facts** - Use Factual and objective language (avoid assumptions or judgements)
- **Note** actions taken and outcomes
- **Use Person-First Language** & avoid stigmatising and negative terms
- **Follow organisational policy for reporting** – debrief with your line manager (this can immediately after (hot) or in the days that follow (cold))

Practitioner Self- Care

Supporting adults with learning disabilities can be rewarding but also emotionally demanding.

- **Use Supervision and team support** – don't carry stress alone.
- **Reflect, but don't self-blame** – learn and move forward.
- **Seek Support** if feeling overwhelmed, this can be from your line manager or senior leadership team.
- **Explore** the 5 ways to wellbeing [5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS](#)



ASSISTANCE

Regulatory Bodies in Scotland



Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Codes: use the code for Social Service Workers and Code for Employer to reflect on and improve your practice, understanding your responsibilities and standards. [Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers](#)



Care Inspectorate: [A quality framework for support services](#) (care at home, including supported living models of support) | Care Inspectorate Hub



Quick References

Calm Training Ltd website: [CALM Trauma Course – Calm Training](#)

Trauma Informed Toolkit: [Supporting documents - Trauma-informed practice: toolkit - gov.scot](#)

How to talk and write about autism [guide - June 2025.pdf](#)

