## Defining avoidable and unavoidable pressure ulcers

## Background

The Department of Health (DH) has been asked to clarify what an avoidable pressure ulcer is in regards the nurse sensitive outcome indicators.

DH has researched the availability of definitions, finding that there are a limited number of definitions in existence to draw from.

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society of the US have produced a position paper, which points to a clear definition of 'avoidable and 'unavoidable' pressure ulcer<sup>1</sup> However, we are using a modified version of the Avoidable and Unavoidable Pressure Ulcers definitions from the Centres for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) 2004, to keep in with UK policy terminology.

The modified definitions are:

**Avoidable Pressure Ulcer:** "Avoidable" means that the person receiving care developed a pressure ulcer and the provider of care did not do one of the following: evaluate the person's clinical condition and pressure ulcer risk factors; plan and implement interventions that are consistent with the persons needs and goals, and recognised standards of practice; monitor and evaluate the impact of the interventions; or revise the interventions as appropriate."

**Unavoidable Pressure Ulcer**: "Unavoidable" means that the person receiving care developed a pressure ulcer even though the provider of the care had evaluated the person's clinical condition and pressure ulcer risk factors; planned and implemented interventions that are consistent with the persons needs and goals; and recognised standards of practice; monitored and evaluated the impact of the interventions; and revised the approaches as appropriate; or the individual person refused to adhere to prevention strategies in spite of education of the consequences of non-adherence"

## **Guidance:**

In determining whether the pressure ulcer is avoidable; commissioners, regulators or others could request to see evidence demonstrating the actions outlined in the "avoidable" definition are demonstrated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Position Paper: Avoidable and Unavoidable Pressure Ulcers, Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (WOCNS) March 2009. Accessed 24/08/2010 <a href="http://www.wocn.org/pdfs/...Us/.../wocn-avoidable\_unavoidable\_position-3-25.pdf">http://www.wocn.org/pdfs/...Us/.../wocn-avoidable\_unavoidable\_position-3-25.pdf</a>