



Health Quality &  
Safety Commission  
Te Tāhū Hauora

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Clinical Leadership team  
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Tēnā koutou

## **Re: Implementation of the Deterioration Early Warning System (DEWS) in Aged Residential Care**

Health Quality & Safety Commission Te Tāhū Hauora (the Commission) is rolling out the national implementation and adoption of the Deterioration Early Warning System (DEWS) within aged residential care.

We will support aged residential care facilities to implement DEWS with a phased approach over two years (not all facilities will implement DEWS at the same time). This follows a 2024 national feasibility study, in which aged residential care providers strongly recommended national adoption.

Please share this information with your clinical, quality, and operational networks:

- [Introduction to DEWS video](#) (<5 minutes)
- [2024 DEWS feasibility study report](#)

## **About DEWS**

DEWS is a structured, evidence-based early warning system designed specifically for older adults living in aged residential care. DEWS combines population-specific clinical indicators with vital signs to support consistent early detection and escalation in the event of acute deterioration. The scoring system is different to hospital early warning systems, reflecting the distinct physiology and deterioration patterns of this population.

DEWS supports:

- the early recognition of the subtle signs of acute deterioration
- a structured assessment and categories of urgency for registered nurses to use
- a standardised escalation pathway based on the urgency category
- critical thinking and clear communication.

Health system alignment:

- DEWS is a track and trigger tool aligned to hospital early warning systems; however, scoring thresholds differ, clinical indicators differ, and the system is calibrated to aged residential care residents (not all older adults).

- DEWS has been developed and tested in aged residential care and is designed for use in that environment only.

## What Health NZ teams may see

As DEWS is adopted nationally, Health NZ services may see the following.

### 1. DEWS documentation accompanying residents

Residents presenting to emergency departments, urgent care, or inpatient services may have with them:

- a DEWS assessment form (DEWS-RN) showing clinical indicators, vital signs, urgency score
- a DEWS summary document (SBARR-DEWS), which is a critical thinking and communication tool used to standardise hand over to primary or secondary care.

### 2. DEWS-informed language in referrals

Aged residential care teams may reference:

- a DEWS score and associated urgency category
- clinical indicators associated with acute deterioration in older people living in care.

## Why DEWS matters for Health NZ

- It provides a nationally consistent, evidence-based approach to recognising acute deterioration in residents.
- It supports safer care across a contracted service and strengthens system-wide quality improvement.
- It contributes to national goals in quality, equity and clinical governance for older people's care.

## Further information

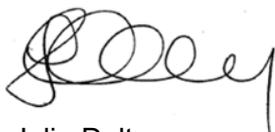
Website: [Deterioration Early Warning System – hqsc.govt.nz](https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/deterioration-early-warning-system)

Email: [DEWS@hqsc.govt.nz](mailto:DEWS@hqsc.govt.nz).

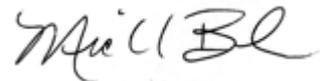
Nāku noa, nā



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