

Samantha Marsh
Senior Coroner for Somerset
Coroner's Office
Old Municipal Building
Corporation Street
Taunton
TA1 4AQ

17th November 2023

Dear Mrs Marsh

I write further to the Inquest into the death of Mrs Evelyn Ann Burcham, 27th September 2023 and your request that within 56 days Aria Care provide a response to the following matters:

- a) the results of discussions with manufacturers about lockable controls; and
- b) Following the Quarterly meeting, any other ideas from Aria about how to reduce this risk.

Following receipt of the request, Aria Care reached out to Shackleton's, our furniture supply partner seeking advice and guidance on riser/recliner chairs and the potential for purchase and supply of handsets that could be locked in a secure position and avoid unauthorised access and repositioning.

Shackleton's advised that due to the large number of riser/recliner manufacturers that a single universal handset, with a lockable feature, was not possible to supply, however, they are able to provide a lockable handset for the chairs they supply. We have trialled this control with other chairs and have had mixed results, with 15% of the chairs tested not suited to the Shackleton's supplied handset.

We have now directed that all future request for the supply of riser/recliner chairs will be processed via Shackleton's and that all chairs supplied to Aria Care will be fitted with lockable handsets.

From the 01st December 2023, residents being newly admitted to the home will be made aware of the Aria Care's requirement for all privately purchased riser/recliner chairs to come fitted with lockable handsets.

Where residents are currently living in our care homes and have purchased privately their riser/recliner chair, and this device is not fitted with a lockable handset, we will work with that resident and/or their family to seek a solution and ensure the riser/recliner is replaced by a chair that has a lockable handset. We anticipate this may take the first quarter of 2024 to fully resolve, where the equipment supplied is privately owned and already in use.

In the meantime, our property services department are working with NH Maintenance (NHM), to explore other options, including the development of a cover that could potentially be used universally, to restrict access to the handset controls, this device would be lockable.

Whilst NHM state they would be able to deliver such a device, they have indicated that development and trial takes time and that they may not be able to provide an immediate short-term solution but could within 2-3 months provide a universal lockable cover.

Whilst waiting on the development by NHM, we will look to use the controls provided by Shackleton's to reduce unauthorised access to riser/recliner chair controls, where they are compatible. For chairs where we cannot control access via the introduction of the covers, we have introduced generic and individualised risk assessments which include the requirement to:

- maintained a safe distance between the riser/recliner and other seating, reducing access to handsets.
- where a resident lacks the physical or cognitive ability to independently control the riser/recliner chair, that once positioned comfortably colleagues will isolate the electrical flow to the chair preventing unauthorised access and repositioning.

Aria Care are committed to delivering a long-term solution to this problem, but have encountered challenges, due to the variety of chairs available across the national marketplace. We are also aware that any decision taken, regarding existing riser/recliner chairs needs to consider those chairs owned or purchased privately and that we will need to liaise with residents and their families to transition to the supply of lockable handsets only devices within our homes.

We have also reached out to the Care Quality Commission, via our corporate link, seeking the Commissions view in regard to our risk reduction approach and specifically any concerns where our plans or approach might impact residents' rights in relation to restrictive practices and how we ensure we deliver the correct balance between safety and restriction.

At our Quarterly Quality Assurance Meeting the adverse event involving Mrs Burcham was revisited, and the following outcomes agreed:


- 1) Introduction of generic risk assessment for colleagues to support the safe use of riser/recliner chairs. This document provides a general guide to colleagues on measures to be taken to safely use and maintain a riser/recliner chair, without taking into consideration the specific and unique needs of the person using the equipment.
- 2) Introduction of resident specific risk assessment for suitability to use a riser/recliner chair. This document builds on the generic risk assessment and provides details for colleagues of how to support individual residents use the equipment safely based on their physical and cognitive abilities and support needs.
- 3) Introduction of an asset register for riser/recliner chair use/deployment, be that supplied by Aria Care or specifically purchased by the resident or their family.
- 4) Completion of an organisational wide survey to understand the extent and supply of riser/recliner within Aria Care.
- 5) Agreement that via a phased approach Aria Care will reduce the use of riser/recliner chairs across the organisation and where an assessed need exists, riser/recliner furniture will be purchased solely from Shackleton's, as our furniture partner, with lockable handsets.

We trust that the actions we have taken and those we propose to take provide assurance of our commitment to resident safety and wellbeing. Every effort is being made to reduce the risks

associated to the supply and correct use of riser/recliner chairs within our homes and we will continue to seek additional control measures to further mitigate risks to people living in our homes and to learn from adverse events, such as this and the sad loss of Mrs Burcham.

Yours sincerely.



, Director of Quality & Governance, Aria Care Group.