

Accessing Client's Homes

City Care Southwest Ltd offers care and support services to adults over the age of 65 in their own homes. Our service is regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in relation to the regulated activity "Personal Care" and in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and its associated regulations 2014.

Version Control

Date	New Version #	Made by	Changes/updates	Review Date
16/11/2023	V1.2023	Rhiannon		16/11/2024
28/03/2024	V1.2024	Rhiannon	Inclusion of regulated activity statement and admin footer	28/03/2025

Statement and purpose of policy

City Care Southwest Ltd is committed to ensuring the safety, privacy, and dignity of all clients when accessing their homes. This policy outlines the procedures for safe and appropriate access, including the use of key safes. The goal is to protect clients from potential security risks and ensure that staff access homes only when necessary and in a secure, respectful manner.

By following these guidelines, City Care Southwest Ltd seeks to safeguard both clients and staff, ensuring that clients feel safe, and that staff are equipped with the knowledge to manage access responsibly. This policy also outlines steps to follow in the event of being unable to access a client's home, ensuring that all situations are handled with care and professionalism.

Scope

This policy contains guidance from legislation and relevant bodies that all staff must adhere to and aligns with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) fundamental standards, NICE guidelines, and safeguarding protocols to protect both clients and staff.

Responsibilities

The Nominated Individual/Directors will:

- Review this policy annually, or sooner as required.
- Conduct quarterly service audits which include a review of the efficacy of this policy in practice.
- Stay up to date with legislation, guidance, and best practice in relation to accessing clients' homes.
- Undertake regular training as part of their continuing professional development.

The Registered Manager will:

- Implement this policy, ensuring that all staff read and understand it.
- Conduct bi-monthly service audits which include a review of the efficacy of this policy in practice.
- Undertake regular training as part of their continuing professional development.
- Stay up to date with legislation, guidance, and best practice in relation to accessing clients' homes.

All staff will:

- Read and understand this policy.
- Attend regular, relevant training in accessing clients' homes.

Accessing Client's Homes

- Comply with the accessing clients' homes policy.
- Follow guidance and advice detailed in the client's care plan.

Procedure

A full assessment of need is conducted for each client prior to the commencement of care and support services. This assessment includes determining the appropriate access methods and any specific instructions related to accessing the client's home, and these are suitably risk assessed.

Access instructions, including key safe numbers if applicable, are documented in the client's care plan. The care plan is stored digitally on Birdie and is accessible to all relevant staff. It also includes emergency contact information to ensure that appropriate steps can be taken in case of any issues with accessing the client's home.

Key Safes

City Care Southwest Ltd promotes the use of key safes as the preferred method for staff to access clients' homes, where the client is unable to answer the door independently. Some clients may have an emergency key safe but prefer to answer the door independently on all visits, unless there is an urgent need for staff or other services such as the police or ambulance service, to gain access. Staff should follow these guidelines when using a key safe:

- Staff are only permitted to access a client's key safe if they are authorised to do so in the clients care plan.
- After using the key safe, staff must scramble the access code immediately to safeguard the client's home.
- The key must be returned to the key safe immediately after use, and the key safe should be securely locked. Under no circumstances should staff keep the key on their person during their visit.
- Staff must ensure the key safe location and code are kept confidential to protect client safety. The code should not be written down or shared with anyone.
- If anyone asks for the code, staff should refer them to the main office via phone or email and report this as a concern to the Registered Manager.

Clients should be encouraged to control who has access to their key safe, and their preferences for access should be documented in their care plan.

Entering the client's home

City Care Southwest Ltd Staff will only enter a client's home during a scheduled visit and will knock and announce their presence before entering a client's home, even when using a key safe. Staff should refer to the clients care plan when entering and greet the client in the agreed way. Staff will carry and present identification when entering a client's home, especially if requested by the client or their family. All staff will be introduced to clients that they have not previously met. If staff are scheduled to visit a client they haven't met, they should check the arrangements for introduction. Any unscheduled visits must be approved by the Registered Manager in advance and recorded in the client's journal including the reason for the unscheduled visit.

Failure to gain access

Clients are made aware of their scheduled visits in advance and arrangements for access are detailed in the client's care plan. If, on arrival, a client advises that they would prefer that the staff member not complete their visit, staff should politely enquire as to the reason and ask the client if they are feeling well, and able to undertake the tasks

Accessing Client's Homes

that were planned, independently. This should then be reported to the Registered Manager. Staff must remain close by, until the Registered Manager has advised on the most appropriate course of action.

Where staff are unable to gain access in the usual way, staff must not leave the property until it has been ascertained that the client is safe and well. There are several steps staff can take in this case, and these are:

1. If the client would usually answer the door, and this is the preferred method detailed in the care plan, staff should call the client on their landline or mobile phone. These numbers are stored on the clients care plan. This enables the client to answer the door as per their preference. If this does not work, proceed to step 2.
2. If the client has a key safe for use in emergencies, use this now. If not, check to see if the door is unlocked, if it is unlocked, open the door and call out to the client. If the client is not home, leave the property immediately, close the door and report the incident to the Registered Manager.
3. If the door is locked or there is no emergency key safe, staff will check the care plan for details of who may have a spare key, for example a neighbour or family member. Staff will report this to the Registered Manager and proceed to step 4. The Registered Manager will try to contact the client and any emergency contacts.
4. Staff will then try to look through the letter box, and in any windows and doors that are safe to access to see if the client is home, asleep or at risk of harm. If the client is observed, and staff are unable to get the client's attention, continue to try step 4 with step 1. If the client appears to be deeply asleep, have fallen, or cannot be seen staff should continue to step 5.
5. In cases where the client cannot be seen, or is hurt, injured or appears to have fallen, staff must contact the emergency services, the Registered Manager and attempt to gain access by calling on neighbours to see if there is a spare key. The Registered or duty manager will already have begun contacting emergency next of kin contacts and should remain in contact with the staff member throughout to keep them updated.
6. If staff can gain access to the property before emergency services arrive, basic life support will be provided to the client in order to preserve life, promote recovery and prevent any worsening.

After any incidences where access was delayed, or where staff were unable to gain access for any reason, staff must raise this as a concern with the Registered Manager, regardless of the outcome.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or when there are changes in relevant legislation or best practices. Regular audits of financial records and gift registers will be conducted to ensure compliance with this policy
