



Review Sheet

Last Reviewed
14 Sep '21Last Amended
14 Sep '21Next Planned Review in 12 months, or
sooner as required.

Business impact



Changes are important, but urgent implementation is not required, incorporate into your existing workflow.

Reason for this review

Scheduled review

Were changes made?

Yes

Summary:

This policy highlights the process to follow should a member of staff require access to a service user's home in the event of a no reply. It has been reviewed and a new policy statement and further reading link added in relation to COVID-19. Existing references also checked to ensure they remain current.

Relevant legislation:

- The Care Quality Commission (Registration) and (Additional Functions) and Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) Regulations 2012
- The Care Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice

Underpinning knowledge - What have we used to ensure that the policy is current:

- Author: Homecare Association, (2019), *'No Reply from Service User' Policy Guidance*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.ukhca.co.uk/downloads.aspx?ID=267> [Accessed: 14/9/2021]
- Author: AGE UK, (2018), *The Herbert Protocol*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/calderdaleandkirklees/about-us/latest-news/articles/2018/the-herbert-protocol/> [Accessed: 14/9/2021]
- Author: Care Quality Commission, (2017), *Key lines of enquiry, prompts and ratings characteristics for adult social care services*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20171020-adult-social-care-kloes-prompts-and-characteristics-showing-changes-final.pdf> [Accessed: 14/9/2021]

Suggested action:

- Encourage sharing the policy through the use of the QCS App
- Share 'Key Facts' with all staff
- Ensure relevant staff are aware of the content of the whole policy

Equality Impact Assessment:

QCS have undertaken an equality analysis during the review of this policy. This statement is a written record that demonstrates that we have shown due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with respect to the characteristics protected by equality law.



1. Purpose

1.1 To ensure that HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD knows how to respond to a 'No Reply' and recognise that this is an emergency situation and takes priority over any other day-to-day business. This is sometimes referred to as 'unable to gain access' or 'access to people's homes'.

1.2 To safeguard the wellbeing of vulnerable Service Users.

1.3 To support HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD in meeting the following Key Lines of Enquiry:

Key Question	Key Lines of Enquiry
SAFE	S1: How do systems, processes and practices keep people safe and safeguarded from abuse?
SAFE	S2: How are risks to people assessed and their safety monitored and managed so they are supported to stay safe and their freedom is respected?
WELL-LED	W5: How does the service work in partnership with other agencies?

1.4 To meet the legal requirements of the regulated activities that {HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD} is registered to provide:

- | The Care Quality Commission (Registration) and (Additional Functions) and Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) Regulations 2012
- | The Care Act 2014
- | Human Rights Act 1998
- | Mental Capacity Act 2005
- | Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice



2. Scope

2.1 The following roles may be affected by this policy:

- | Registered Manager
- | Other management
- | Care staff
- | Care Co-ordinator

2.2 The following Service Users may be affected by this policy:

- | A Service User whose visit is scheduled and when staff would reasonably expect the Service User to be at home

2.3 The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:

- | Family
- | Representatives
- | Commissioners
- | Local Authority
- | NHS



3. Objectives

3.1 To ensure that all staff recognise their responsibility for the safety and security of all Service Users. Failing to establish the exact situation can lead to tragic consequences for Service Users, their families and the staff of HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD, including:

- | Death or serious harm to the Service User
- | Distress for relatives and others
- | Police or safeguarding investigation
- | Adverse publicity in local or national print or broadcast media

3.2 To ensure that there are clear escalation procedures in place when staff are unable to access a Service User's home, and that effective communication mechanisms are in place to prevent staff from being unable to gain access to carry out scheduled care and support.



4. Policy

4.1 HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD recognises the urgency in all situations where access cannot be made to a Service User's home at the time of a scheduled visit and the Service User does not respond to requests for entry. Care Workers will consider there to be a possible emergency situation which requires immediate action to establish the wellbeing and safety of the Service User, or which requires them to alert the emergency services where appropriate.

It is the policy of HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD that under no circumstances will the attempt to establish the Service User's safety be discontinued, until the exact circumstances are known, or the matter has been placed in the hands of the emergency services. Where appropriate to do so, the Service User's family or representative will be informed of the situation.

HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD recognises its responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of staff. At no point during or after the incident will the safety of staff or others be put at risk.

4.2 Where a Service User's care is commissioned by Leeds City Council, the Access to People's Home Policy and Procedure at HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD will dovetail with the Leeds City Council policies and procedures to ensure a consistent response.

4.3 All managers, care co-ordinators and Care Workers working for or on behalf of HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD must be familiar with this policy and procedure where Service Users do not appear to be at home, or do not respond to requests for entry.

In the event that HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD uses agency staff or sub-contracts their care visits, HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD will ensure the Access to People's Home Policy and Procedure is understood and followed by the worker when the worker is allocated any visits.

4.4 HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD also recognises that during times of uncertainty (such as the coronavirus pandemic) extra precautions might be required when entering a Service User's home, and staff will follow this policy in line with other related policies in the QCS Management System and the COVID-19 Hub.



5. Procedure

5.1 Action Required by the Care Worker

At all times, the Care Worker will consider their own safety, and will not attempt any of the following actions if they have any reason to be concerned:

- 1 The Care Worker will repeat the usual method for gaining access at least three times, allowing sufficient time for the Service User to respond if they would normally be expected to do so, e.g. knock at the door and wait for a reply
- 1 If the Service User's telephone number is known, the Care Worker will contact them by telephone if they are able to do so
- 1 The Care Worker must look for signs which may indicate that the house is empty or that the Service User's condition has changed. This may include letters or newspapers lying uncollected at the door, unopened bottles of milk which have not been collected, or curtains closed when they would normally be open
- 1 The Care Worker will attempt to establish whether the Service User is at home (including the possibility that they may be lying on the floor) by looking through the letterbox or any windows at the property which can be accessed safely, and in any gardens adjoining the home
- 1 Where appropriate, the Care Worker will attempt to attract the Service User's attention by calling them through the letterbox or through an open window
- 1 The Care Worker will look for possible signs of break-ins, such as broken windows or doors which have been forced open. If there is any possibility that the Service User's home has been broken into, or that someone may be in the home without the Service User's consent, the Care Worker will not attempt to enter the home, but will contact the Police by calling 999. If the Care Worker does not have a mobile telephone, they must use a payphone if there is one nearby, or consider attracting assistance from neighbours or passers-by if it is safe to do so
- 1 If the Care Worker can see the Service User, but they are not responding or appear to be distressed, they must contact the emergency services by dialling 999 and ask for the Police or ambulance services (as appropriate)
- 1 If it is safe to do so, the Care Worker will consider talking to neighbours to establish the Service User's whereabouts, or whether they have concerns about the Service User's wellbeing
- 1 If speaking to neighbours, the Care Worker must apologise for disturbing them, identify themselves by showing their ID badge or card, and state that they are concerned about the Service User's wellbeing
- 1 Where necessary, Care Workers must be prepared to provide neighbours with the telephone number of HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD if they wish to speak to their employer. The Care Worker will make contact with HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD by telephone immediately and ask to speak to their line manager or the manager in charge at the time. Out of hours, the Care Worker must contact the On-Call Team and follow the same process
- 1 The Care Worker must not just leave a message for the manager to call, but must explain their concerns to a manager who can act on them. The Care Worker will follow any instructions given by HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD, including waiting at the Service User's home (if it is safe to do so). The Care Worker must not leave the Service User's home until instructed to by HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD (or the On-Call Team if the incident occurs out of hours)

5.2 Actions of All Staff Involved in Concerns about a Service User's Location or Wellbeing

Any member of staff receiving a call about the inability to access the Service User's home must ensure that the call is dealt with by a manager capable of responding to the issue and that the manager has accepted responsibility for managing the issue.

It is generally unacceptable to leave voicemail messages or notes which could go missing, or which may not be acted upon without delay. Any details of calls must be logged in the Service User's records. This includes dates and times as well as who was involved.

5.3 Actions to be Taken by Staff at HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD

Managers (this includes co-ordinators, schedulers, managers at HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD and on-call staff) must be aware that concerns raised by an inability to enter a Service User's home could be a

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potential emergency and that the policy and procedure must be followed until the location and safety of the Service User is established. Being unable to gain access takes priority over all routine activity of HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD, unless failure to do other work will result in immediate harm to another Service User. On being alerted to a situation where access to the Service User's home has not been possible, the manager responsible must:

- | Advise the Care Worker to remain at the Service User's home
- | Check whether there is any prior information at HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD about the Service User's absence from home
- | Confirm if the initial actions to be taken by the Care Worker (as outlined above) have been completed
- | Consider whether there is sufficient concern to summon emergency services immediately
- | Assess the Care Worker's safety for any future actions requested
- | Instruct the Care Worker to complete any necessary actions not already undertaken
- | Follow any contractual unable to gain access procedures

A manager must attempt contact by telephone with the following people to establish any known reason for non-response, and/or the Service User's location and safety:

- | The Service User's home telephone, and any mobile phone, if known
- | The Service User's emergency contact
- | The Service User's main representative
- | Members of the Service User's family or friends, where known
- | Any other responsible person or organisation that may know the Service User's whereabouts and safety
- | The Service User's social worker or named nurse (where the care is commissioned by a local authority or health authority)
- | If the manager is reassured that the Service User's location and safety are known following a conversation with any of the above, this must be documented in the Service User's records and the procedure halted
- | If necessary, and safe to do so, the manager may request that the Care Worker attempts to gain access to the Service User's home. Please refer to section 5.4 for the procedure to follow
- | If the care is commissioned by Leeds City Council and there is no named social worker, the Social Services Duty Team must be contacted and advised of the situation. Advice will be taken on the next steps. HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD must document the name of the Duty Social Worker and the date and time contacted
- | If HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD is unable to satisfy itself that the Service User is safe, the manager must contact the Police and co-operate with all reasonable requests for information and assistance. The Care Worker must be informed and remain at the premises unless instructed to leave by HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD or the Police
- | The actions taken by the manager, or information that the Police or emergency services have been summoned, will be recorded in the Service User's notes and the Service User's main contact, family members or social worker will be advised accordingly
- | The manager must check if the Care Worker involved is due to visit any other Service User/s and if the emergency response will make the Care Worker late. If this is the case, those Service Users must be contacted immediately where possible. Where calls are time-critical, a replacement member of staff known to the Service User will be sent

5.4 Attempting to Gain Access to a Service User's Home

Caution must be taken by Care Workers in the event of any of the following actions, until they have contacted their manager to discuss the situation and agree that it is safe to do so.

Together with their manager, the Care Worker must assess whether they are able to enter the Service User's home and whether it is safe to do so. They must think about whether there may be anyone else in the house, or whether there are pets which might injure the Care Worker.

If HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD has the Service User's prior permission to do so, and if a key to the Service User's home is available; if a key can be obtained from a safe place (e.g. through a key safe);

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or the Service User's home is fitted with a security keypad, use it to open the Service User's door. Do not attempt to force doors or window frames, or to smash windows to gain access.

Arrangements Where the Care Worker has Access to the Home, but the Service User is Not There

In some situations, the Care Worker may have access to the Service User's home as part of their normal duties (e.g. because the person is unable to open the door). If the Service User cannot be found, the steps outlined in the section below must be followed.

Arrangements for Checking Individual Rooms in the Service User's Home

The Care Worker must announce their presence before entering the home as well as in each individual room, in a loud and clear voice. Where the Care Worker does come into contact with the Service User, identification should be shown by the Care Worker, as per the Staff Identification Policy and Procedure.

The Care Worker must establish whether the Service User is present by checking each room on the premises, if it is safe to do so, and if necessary, contact the Police or ambulance service as appropriate. The Care Worker must be aware of the possibility of the Service User being behind a locked door or on the floor and be ready to seek guidance from their office on how to proceed if that is what they find. The Care Worker must record the time and date that the home was entered in the Service User's care records as well as any actions needed. Once access to the Service User's home is complete, the Care Worker must make sure that the premises is secure, that the door used to gain entry is locked and that any keys obtained from a key safe have been returned.

5.5 Process for Service Users Known to 'Walk About' from Home

Every Service User has a right to independence, choice and control. There may be Service Users who do not inform HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD when they are going out and this may be an issue if a care visit is due. If the Service User has capacity, a process must be agreed with the Service User (and any commissioners) about what the Service User wants to happen if a Care Worker fails to gain access. HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD will ensure that there are detailed records about significant people, places and contact numbers if the Service User is known to walk about and leave the home. HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD will work closely with other external partners to ensure that a plan is put in place to keep the Service User independent but safe.

Tools such as the [Herbert Protocol](#) used in care homes may be useful to adapt for use with Service Users with dementia, mental health conditions or learning disabilities.

5.6 Communication Between Other Care Providers

HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD will ensure that there are robust communication procedures in place when Service Users move between other care providers, particularly following admission or discharge from hospital, to ensure that 'unable to gain access' incidents do not arise when a Service User is expected to be at home and their arrival home is delayed, to avoid placing unnecessary strain on emergency services.

5.7 Auditing

All 'unable to gain access' incidents will be documented and a root cause analysis undertaken to understand why they occurred if procedures were followed correctly and if there are any lessons that can be learned from the incident. High numbers of 'unable to gain access' incidents may indicate an issue with rota scheduling, travel time, access arrangements or communication issues.

5.8 Safeguarding and Regulatory Notification

Where an incident of being unable to gain access occurs, and the Service User is harmed or has been put at risk of harm because of a failure by a Care Worker, HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD or another organisation then a safeguarding notification must be made. HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD also has a statutory requirement to submit a notification to the Care Quality Commission.

HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD must ensure that all staff are aware that 'unable to gain access' can be a safeguarding matter and that failure to follow the agreed procedures by any member of staff working for or on behalf of HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD may result in disciplinary action being taken.



6. Definitions

6.1 No Reply

- People receiving a service who do not answer the door, for example, on a day when the service is being provided. This is referred to by the CQC as Access to People's Homes

6.2 Walking About

- Many people with dementia feel the urge to walk about and in some cases, leave their homes. Walking is not a problem in itself - it can help to relieve stress and boredom and is a good form of exercise. When a person with dementia often walks about, it can be worrying for those around them and may at times put the person in danger
- It may not be clear why the person is walking about, and this is often referred to as 'wandering'. However, this term is unhelpful because it suggests aimlessness, whereas the walking often does have a purpose
- Rather than dismissing it, it is important to think about how the person's independence, safety and dignity can be preserved

6.3 Herbert Protocol

- The Herbert Protocol initiative is named after George Herbert, a war veteran of the Normandy landings who lived with dementia
- It is an initiative adopted by many police forces compiled of useful information which may be used in the event of a vulnerable person with dementia going missing. HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD will seek advice from its local Police force on the initiative in the local area

6.4 Missing

- Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character; or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another



Key Facts - Professionals

Professionals providing this service should be aware of the following:

- In situations where the Service User is likely to be at high risk without the provision of services, every effort will be made to provide support. If the Service User continues to refuse services, the risks will be clearly documented and signed by the person concerned
- This assessment will include any issues relating to mental capacity or functioning, and will be documented on file
- All Service Users have the right to refuse services. However, a risk assessment will be completed to ensure that HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD is clear about the risks posed to the person without the provision of services



Key Facts - People affected by the service

People affected by this service should be aware of the following:

- As part of the risk assessment procedures at HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD, you will be asked who you would like contacted in an emergency situation
- If you think you will have difficulty answering the door, you must discuss access arrangements with HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD
- If you will not be at home when your Care Worker is scheduled to visit, you must let HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD know in advance, so that HOLISTIC QUALITY CARE LTD can ensure the Care Worker does not attend



Further Reading

As well as the information in the 'underpinning knowledge' section of the review sheet we recommend that you add to your understanding in this policy area by considering the following materials:

UK Government - Coronavirus:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>



Outstanding Practice

To be 'outstanding' in this policy area you could provide evidence that:

- | The wide understanding of the policy is enabled by proactive use of the QCS App
- | There is a clear culture that staff understand the importance of communicating any information about Service Users being away from home, or of planned visits being cancelled, and this information is passed on accordingly
- | Any 'unable to gain access' incidents are reviewed and the lessons learnt are applied
- | There is evidence that staff have been trained and understand the Access to People's Homes Policy and Procedure on induction
- | Service User risk assessments reflect their right to choice and to refuse services. However, this is supported by robust mental capacity assessments and evidence of valid consent



Forms

Currently there is no form attached to this policy.