

POL50 – Continuity of Care Policy and Procedure

Serendipity Healthcare Ltd
Unit 5 Millennium Way, Dunston, Chesterfield, Derbyshire
S41 8ND



1. Purpose

1.1 To ensure that Serendipity Healthcare Ltd recognises the importance of continuity of care for all Service Users.

1.2 To support Serendipity Healthcare Ltd in meeting the following Key Lines of Enquiry:

| Key Question | Key Lines of Enquiry |
|--------------|--|
| CARING | C1: How does the service ensure that people are treated with kindness, respect and compassion, and that they are given emotional support when needed? |
| EFFECTIVE | E1: Are people's needs and choices assessed and care, treatment and support delivered in line with current legislation, standards and evidence-based guidance to achieve effective outcomes? |
| 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? |
| SAFE | S3: How does the service make sure that there are sufficient numbers of suitable staff to support people to stay safe and meet their needs? |
| WELL-LED | W2: Does the governance framework ensure that responsibilities are clear and that quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements are understood and managed? |

1.3 To meet the legal requirements of the regulated activities that Serendipity Healthcare Ltd is registered to provide:

- The Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 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
- Care staff

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

- Service Users

2.3 The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:

- Family
- Advocates
- Representatives
- Commissioners

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- External health professionals
- NHS

3. Objectives

- 3.1** For Service Users to receive a seamless service that meets their needs and is of a consistently high standard.
- 3.2** For staff to have a good understanding of the systems and processes in place for effective continuity of care and to have an awareness that the lack of continuity of care can be a safeguarding and human rights issue.

4. Policy

- 4.1** Providing continuity of care to all Service Users will be viewed as central to providing a high- quality service at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd.
- 4.2** Serendipity Healthcare Ltd understands that “Continuity of Care” means that the Service User must have the minimum number of changes of Care Workers in order to minimise disruption to their routines and ensure consistency and quality of care. A key worker must also be allocated, where possible, for each Service User.
- 4.3** Each Service User will be offered staff who are matched to them in order to meet their needs, expectations and wishes. Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will do this by following NICE guidelines ensuring that:
- The Service User is supported to develop a professional relationship with the Care Worker and Serendipity Healthcare Ltd so that Serendipity Healthcare Ltd is familiar with how that Service User likes their Care to be given, and can readily identify and respond to risks and concerns
 - The Service User is introduced to new Care Workers before the Care starts
 - There are sufficient numbers of staff to build a team of Care Workers around the Service User
 - The Service User is informed in advance if Care Workers are changed and provided with an explanation as to why
 - Service Users are involved in negotiations regarding any changes to their Care, for example, when visits will be made
 - The major changes that can make people feel unsafe are recognised, Care Workers are able to deliver Care in a way that respects the Service User's cultural, religious and communication needs and reflects all of the 'protected characteristics' in the Equality Act 2010
- 4.4** Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will maintain a clear register of Care Workers who have the relevant skills and knowledge and who have been matched to the Service User to meet their needs. This register will be held in line with Data Protection requirements.
- 4.5** Where Service Users are assessed as lacking mental capacity, Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will ensure that the staff coordinating the Care prioritise the need to ensure consistency of Care and that additional measures are in place to ensure that Care Workers adhere to the agreed Care Plan scheduled visits.

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- 4.6** Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will comply with any contractual requirements in terms of the numbers of Care Workers required where this is applicable.
- 4.7** The Care Act ensures that people receive continuity of care when they move from one place to another. Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will ensure that partnership working is effective. For Service Users living in their own homes, Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will ensure that there are robust communication mechanisms if Service Users are admitted to hospital or respite or if they move between care providers.
- 4.8** Serendipity Healthcare Ltd recognises that, where there are issues with continuity of care, it may indicate that there are recruitment pipeline issues. The Registered Manager will ensure that, where staff coordinating the Care are struggling to allocate regular Care Workers to a particular Service User, the root cause of why this is occurring will be investigated and action will be taken to rectify the issue as quickly as possible.
- 4.9** During times of emergency such as the coronavirus pandemic, Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will look to maintain continuity of its Care Workers as much as possible. In some cases, regular Care Workers may be required to self-isolate due to the pandemic and where this occurs Service Users will be introduced to alternative Care Workers, who are suitable to provide them support and care.

5. Procedure

5.1 Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will plan for a reasonable number of Care Workers per Service User, depending on the complexity of the Service User's care needs and the number of visits required. This will be reviewed to ensure that Serendipity Healthcare Ltd can safely meet the Service User's needs and promote continuity of care.

All Service Users will be allocated key workers. Their role is to support the Service User, ensuring that robust communication is in place between the Service User and Serendipity Healthcare Ltd and supporting communication between other healthcare professionals. The key worker role is designed to enable the Service User to have familiarity with key staff and yet still allow for the operational management of meeting the needs of the Service User with different Care Workers.

Serendipity Healthcare Ltd recognises that having a key worker may be challenging but recognises the importance of having continuity of care for Service Users being allocated the same regular Care Worker as far as possible.

5.2 Keyworker System

The Registered Manager or a delegated other will match the requirements of the Service User with the most suitable Care Workers.

Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will communicate this information to the Service User and any family members, informing them prior to the Care Worker's arrival of the name of the Care Workers and the time and dates of their visit.

The Registered Manager will not make unnecessary changes to the identified key workers, and they will only be changed for legitimate reasons, such as:

- Sickness, annual leave, training or the key worker leaving Serendipity Healthcare Ltd
- The needs of the Service User have changed and the key worker does not have the necessary skills to provide the service
- The key worker is unavailable for specific times or additional hours
- The Service User requests a change of key worker

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- There are professional boundaries issues
- Safeguarding concerns arise

5.3 Care Worker Allocation

The Care Worker will be matched to the Service User following an assessment of the Service User's needs.

The Care Worker will have the skills, experience and training to meet the needs and expectations of the Service User as outlined in the Care Plan.

The Service User has a right to request or change a Care Worker and this decision must be respected and accepted. Service Users must be asked if they would like a Care Worker of the same gender.

The Care Workers assigned to the Service User must have an understanding of the Service User's particular needs and abilities.

5.4 Care Worker Management

The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring that there is a sufficient pool of Care Workers who are able to engage in a positive relationship with the Service User.

The Registered Manager must ensure that all Care Workers are suitably trained and fully competent to carry out the duties required. They may decide that a Care Worker for a Service User must change if:

- The Service User complains that the relationship is not working
- The Care Worker leaves Serendipity Healthcare Ltd
- The Care Worker is unable to establish a positive relationship with the Service User
- The Registered Manager believes that the relationship is not in the best interests of the Service User or the Care Worker
- The Service User's needs change and it is apparent that the Care Worker does not have the skills, knowledge or experience to support the Service User
- Professional boundaries are breached and there is a risk of a safeguarding incident arising, putting the Service User at risk
- Care Workers are having to travel far to visit Service Users and this is impractical, unsustainable and leading to late or missed calls

5.5 Systems of Communication

Successful continuity of care is based on Serendipity Healthcare Ltd having effective communication channels. Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will have local systems in place to promote effective communication between Care Workers in order to maintain the current understanding of Service Users' needs.

The Registered Manager will ensure that all relevant staff are aware of these communication channels. Systems will be subject to ongoing review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and are effective. Systems identified include, but are not limited to:

- Handover procedure between Serendipity Healthcare Ltd and the Care Worker caring for the Service User
- Care Plan and Service User daily visit records
- Communications with other healthcare professionals e.g. pharmacists, GP
- Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will have a system in place to ensure that any changes in the Care Worker are communicated to the Service User before the visit is due to take place
- Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will have a system in place to ensure that the Service User knows who will be visiting them each week and at what time. This may be in the form of a weekly rota

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- Where the Care Worker is unable to attend at short notice, the Service User must be contacted to advise them that a replacement will be sent and at what time they will arrive
- Care Workers will all carry their identification badges and show them to the Service User when they arrive
- The Registered Manager will conduct regular audits on consistency of Care to ensure that Service Users are not having too many changes of Care Workers

5.6 Transferring Between Providers Care Assessment

Before commencing a care service, a full assessment must be undertaken to identify as much information as possible to aid continuity of care. Where care needs are complex, staff will gather information from any other professionals currently supporting the Service User. Consent will be gained, as necessary, from the Service User for the sharing of information.

Where a Service User lacks the capacity to consent to the sharing of information, the Mental Capacity Act will be followed and decisions made in the Service User's best interest. Staff will refer to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 Policy and Procedure at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd.

Transfer of Care

In the event of a Service User transferring to another care provider, Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will ensure that the provider has information available to them to continue to deliver care safely. This will consist of:

- Details of Care Plans and risk assessments
- Details of medication support
- Infection control status
- Any other concerns

5.7 Links with Other Healthcare Professionals

- All new referrals to healthcare professionals will be recorded within the Service User's Care Plan once Serendipity Healthcare Ltd is made aware
- Ongoing visits will be recorded within the Care Plans and communicated to the relevant Care Workers, with contact details clearly documented
- Systems will be in place to easily identify communications taking place between staff and regular visiting professionals such as GPs or district nurses
- Copies of email requests will be held as an audit trail to effective communication until it is deemed safe to destroy them by confidential means

5.8 Late or Missed Visits

Serendipity Healthcare Ltd must ensure that staff understand the Late and Missed Visits Policy and Procedure at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd and as a minimum:

- The Care Worker must avoid missing visits. They will be aware that missing visits can have serious implications for the Service User's health and wellbeing
- Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will closely monitor for risks associated with missed or late visits and take prompt remedial action, recognising that Service Users living alone or those who lack capacity might be particularly vulnerable if visits are missed or late
- Ensure that plans are in place for missed visits. These plans may include:
 - Making arrangements for a family member, carer or neighbour to visit

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- Giving the Care Worker contact details for the Service User
- Setting out clearly in the Service User's risk assessment what must happen if a visit is missed
- Put contingency plans into action when visits are missed or late
- Ensure that monitoring of missed and late visits are embedded in the quality assurance system of Serendipity Healthcare Ltd and discuss at contract monitoring meetings
- Ensure that the Care Worker contacts Serendipity Healthcare Ltd if they will be late or unable to visit, so that their manager can inform the Service User

5.9 Record Keeping

- Staff must ensure that Service Users' records are contemporaneous, person-centred and kept up to date, whilst ensuring, where possible, that the Service User is involved in their own Care Planning and decision making
- Records will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act
- Staff must document any changes to a Service User and contact Serendipity Healthcare Ltd immediately to ensure good communication and ensure that any action required can be undertaken
- Staff can refer to the Care Planning and record-keeping policies at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd for further information

5.10 Training

- All staff responsible for the care of Service Users will be aware of the communication systems in use at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd
- This will include record keeping of both Service Users' records and the communication channels at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd
- Care Workers will be taught to use the communication tools used at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd to aid effective communication with other professionals
- Staff meetings, supervisions and appraisals will be used to inform staff of communication systems as well as in daily practice

5.11 Recruitment

Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will consider values-based recruitment to ensure that Care Worker values align with the values and ethos of Serendipity Healthcare Ltd.

The recruitment pipeline must be regularly reviewed to ensure that there are sufficient pools of staff to meet the needs of the Service Users. Consideration must be given to any cultural or language requirements to ensure that staff can communicate effectively with Service Users, whilst eliminating any barriers to high-quality care being given.

5.12 Audit and Evaluation

- Service User records will be subject to audit in accordance with local governance arrangements. Findings will be discussed with individual Care Workers and themes shared at staff meetings. Audits will be used to drive

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continuing review of practice and quality assurance

- The Registered Manager will seek feedback from Service Users, their families and visiting professionals about communications in Serendipity Healthcare Ltd as a means of identifying if changes need to be made
- All accidents/incidents, complaints and suggestions will be reviewed as part of governance activity and any themes around communication and continuity of care will be investigated and reflected upon. Events will be used as an opportunity to learn and introduce measures to reduce the risk of reoccurrence

5.13 COVID-19

During the coronavirus pandemic continuity of Care Workers will be maintained as much as possible. Where a regular Care Worker is unable to attend a Service User visit, Serendipity Healthcare Ltd will follow this policy and ensure that the pool of Care Workers for the Service User is utilised. Any new Care Workers will be introduced to the Service User and where suitable added to their regular pool of Care Workers. Further information on the coronavirus pandemic can be found in the COVID-19 hub on the QCS management system.

6. Definitions

6.1 Continuity of Care

- Continuity of Care means ensuring that the same regular Care Workers are allocated to a Service User. Service Users will ideally have a pool of Care Workers whom they are familiar with in order to ensure 'continuity of care'

6.2 Keyworker

- A key worker's role is to understand a Service User's particular needs and coordinate and organise the service to meet those needs. With regard to continuity of care, they help to facilitate colleagues with knowledge and support to meet the needs of the Service User in their absence. A key worker may be a senior care worker, team leader or a Care Worker who visits frequently and has a good relationship with the Service User. It does not have to denote the level of seniority or pay scale

6.3 Values Based Recruitment

- Values based recruitment (VBR) is an approach to help attract and select employees whose personal values and behaviours align with the Organisation's values

6.4 Coronavirus

- Novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China. The virus was named severe acute respiratory coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease it causes is called COVID- 19

6.5 Pandemic

- A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease, COVID-19 was characterised as a pandemic on 11th March 2020

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