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POLICY STATEMENT

The aim of good quality domiciliary care must always be to promote a way of life for service users which permits them to enjoy, to the greatest possible extent, their rights as individual human beings. This involves making key principles fundamental to the work of Homecare D & D Ltd.

This policy is available for managers, staff and service users who may be concerned about the risk accepting services poses to the value they place on their privacy and dignity

This document outlines the policy of Homecare D & D Ltd in relation to providing services which respect the privacy and dignity of our service users.

Homecare D & D Ltd aims at all times to respect the right of its service users to privacy and dignity, recognising that these values can easily be threatened by the processes covering the provision of care in a service user's own home.

ASSESSING CARE NEEDS

We recognise that making an assessment of the needs of a service user can be very intrusive. We are obliged to ask questions about the most intimate areas of a service user's life and it is helpful at the outset of our contact to observe a service user in their own private environment where care will be delivered.

We will do everything possible to limit the embarrassment a service user can experience at this stage and to provide all possible reassurances about the nature of our operations generally and particularly the confidentiality of our information systems and the sensitivity of our workforce.

Some potential service users will wish a carer or representative to be present during the assessment interviews, but we do not assume that they will necessarily be privy to all of the information the service user has to provide about them. If it seems helpful we will arrange for some parts of the interview to take place with the service user alone.

During the period when we are providing services, we need from time to time to review the situation to ensure that our services remain appropriate and to make adjustments to respond to changing care needs.

If the staff who undertake a review are not already known to the service user, it will require additional sensitivity since from the service user's point of view they are confronting a stranger, in a sense a fresh invader of their private space.

Care workers too may pick up some information about a service user's changing care needs during the process of service delivery. The worker should check with the service user whether they have any objections to details being recorded, though they may have to explain that information does indeed have to be shared with colleagues in the agency.

Service user's rights relating to privacy and dignity

- To make an assessment of the needs of a service user in a way that is not intrusive.

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- To ask questions about the most intimate areas of a service user's life at the outset of our contact, and to observe a service user in their own private environment where care will be delivered.
- To limit the embarrassment a service user can experience at this stage and to provide reassurances about the confidentiality of our information systems and the sensitivity of our staff.
- To offer the presence of a carer or representative during the assessment interviews. If it seems helpful we will arrange for some parts of the interview to take place with the service user alone.
- To review the care plan to ensure that our services remain appropriate and to make adjustments to respond to changing care needs.
- To introduce staff to the service user prior to the service start date.
- To inform the service user if changes are needed to the care plan to meet their changing needs and to inform appropriate manager.
- To pass information about service users from a care worker to a manager, or between care workers and treat with respect
- To provide a same sex care worker where possible

HANDLING INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICE USERS WITHIN THE AGENCY

When information about service users has to be passed from a care worker to a manager, or between care workers, it will always be treated with respect. Arrangements for processing, handling and storing data are based on the need to retain as much privacy for our service users as possible. (See Homecare D & D Ltd policy on confidentiality of information).

BEHAVIOUR OF CARE WORKERS

Care workers are instructed never to forget that they are guests in the service user's home, and that they must be careful that familiarity does not blunt the respect they should continue to show to their host.

We know that some service users have forms of address for themselves to which they are particularly attached, or conversely forms they find particularly offensive. Our care workers will make note of and observe such individual preferences, will always address a service user by their chosen name, and know that the acceptable usage may vary between people or over time.

We recognise that the carrying out of some tasks, particularly those relating to intimate bodily functions, places a service user's privacy and dignity at severe risk. We undertake that our care workers will show great tact in such situations.

Some situations may require additional sensitivity if the worker is a different sex from the service user, so we will attempt if asked to provide service users with same sex care staff. Care workers have been instructed to be alert to the potential invasion of privacy involved on handling a service user's personal possessions or documents, and will always respect boundaries the service user chooses to set. If a service user is particularly sensitive about their privacy or dignity in any other area of their lifestyle, care workers will tread with particular care.

SERVICE USERS FROM MINORITY GROUPS

We are aware that issues of privacy and dignity may be especially sensitive when the service user is from a minority group. We seek to make our staff alert to points of cultural difference they may encounter in their work and we encourage our service users to draw to our attention any particular matter of which we should be aware.

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PRIVACY

An individual's right to privacy involves being free from intrusion or unwelcome attention. The privacy of anyone receiving domiciliary care is inevitably threatened by the fact that care workers have to enter their property regularly, to observe them in vulnerable situations and to keep, and share with colleagues, records on matters most people would wish to reveal only to those very close to them.

A domiciliary care agency should maximise its service users' privacy by:

- a) Setting up systems so that staff enter a service users' property and rooms within the property only with express consent
- b) Informing service users that they have a right not to have to interact with or be interrupted by a worker, when, for example, they are entertaining a visitor or are engaged on an intimate activity on their own account
- c) Respecting the fact that a service users' possessions are private and always acting in accordance with the fact that care and support workers are guests on the service user's territory
- d) Guaranteeing that staff respect service users' right to make telephone calls and carry on conversations without being overheard or observed
- e) Ensuring that service user records are seen only by those with a legitimate need to know the information they contain

DIGNITY

The right to dignity involves recognising the intrinsic value of people as individuals and the specific nature of each person's particular needs. Dignity can easily become threatened for a service user receiving domiciliary care if workers help them insensitively with intimate tasks, fail to give them appropriate respect, use inappropriate names or titles, do not provide timely assistance when required with a service user's clothing or personal appearance, or display attitudes which are unsympathetic to the feelings of vulnerability which often accompany disability.

A domiciliary care agency should maximise its service users' dignity by:

- a) Arranging that service users who require assistance with bodily tasks such as dressing, bathing and toileting should as far as possible be helped by a care worker of their choice and, if desired, of the sex of their choice
- b) Ensuring that service users receive the necessary assistance with dressing and maintaining their clothes
- c) Offering or accessing help for service users with make-up, manicure, hairdressing and other elements of their appearance so that they can present themselves as they would wish
- d) Helping to minimise service users' feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and vulnerability
- e) Treating service users with the sort of respect which reinforces personhood and individual characteristics, addressing them and introducing them to others in their preferred style, responding to specific cultural demands and requirements, and aiming to maintain relationships which are warm and trusting but appropriate to the relationship of worker to service user

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INDEPENDENCE

Independence means having opportunities to think, plan, act and take sensibly calculated risks without continual reference to others. Service users have, by definition, decided some of their situation inevitably involves a degree of dependence on others. It is therefore important that agencies provide service users with discreet support and encouragement to stay in control of as many of the remaining aspects of their lives as possible.

A domiciliary care agency should maximise its service users' independence by:

- a) Helping service users to manage for themselves where possible rather than becoming totally dependence on others
- b) Encouraging service users to take as much responsibility as possible for their own healthcare and medication
- c) Involving service users fully in planning their own care, devising and implementing their care plans and managing the records of care
- d) Working with carers, relatives and friends of service users to provide as continuous a service as is feasible
- e) Creating a climate in the delivery of care and fostering attitudes in those around a service user which focus on capacities rather than on disabilities

SECURITY

In providing services to people with disabilities there is a difficult balance to be struck between helping them to experience as much independence as possible and making sure that they are not exposed to unnecessary hazards. Taking care of the security of service users therefore means helping to provide an environment and support structure which offers sensible protection from danger, and comfort and readily available assistance when required. Service users who have accepted domiciliary care have at least implicitly recognized their concern for a degree of security but this should not be interpreted as a demand for a totally safe or risk-free lifestyle; taking reasonable risks can be interesting, exciting and fun, as well as necessary.

A domiciliary care agency should respond to its service users' need for security by:

- a) Ensuring that help is tactfully at hand when a service user needs or wishes to engage in any activity which places them in situations of substantial risk
- b) Helping to create a physical environment which is free from unnecessary sources of danger to vulnerable people or their property
- c) Carrying out thorough risk assessments in relation to premises, equipment and the activities of the service user who is being helped
- d) Advising service users about situations or activities in which their disability is likely to put them or their property at risk
- e) Checking that staff of the agency are well selected, trained and briefed to provide services responsibly, professionally and with compassion and never to exploit their positions to abuse service users

CIVIL RIGHTS

Disability almost invariably has the effect of restricting people's exercise of their civil rights by limiting access to public services, facilities and opportunities for participation.

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A domiciliary care agency has limited powers to correct this tendency, but nevertheless can respond to its service users' need to continue to enjoy their civil rights by:

- a) Helping service users to decide whether they wish to participate in elections, accessing for them information on their democratic options, and either providing or obtaining any assistance that they need to vote
- b) Helping service users to make use of as wide a range as possible of public services such as libraries, education and transport
- c) Encouraging service users to make full use of health services in all ways appropriate to their medical, nursing and therapeutic needs
- d) Providing easy access for service users and their friends, relatives and representatives to complain about or give feedback on services
- e) Providing support to service users in their participating as fully and diversely as they wish in the activities of their communities through voluntary work, religious observance, involvement in associations and charitable giving

TRAINING

Training will be given relating to intimate bodily functions to ensure privacy and dignity at all times.

Care workers will be instructed to be alert to the potential invasion of privacy and dignity involving handling a service user's personal possessions or documents.

We will make our staff alert to points of cultural difference they may encounter in their work and we encourage our service users to draw to our attention any particular matter of which we should be aware.

All staff will receive training in Autonomy, Independence, Privacy and Dignity through Induction training and formal qualifications to National Occupational Standards, which will be updated as required