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THIS POLICY IS FOR:	Staff including Agency Workers (temporary workers), Commissioners and Service Users

CONTINUITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT

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CONTINUITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ensure that Nursing Direct recognises the importance of continuity of care for all Service Users.
- 1.2 To support Nursing Direct in meeting the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) and relevant Quality Statements as set out by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- 1.3 **Relevant Legislation**
 - 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
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - UK GDPR

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 Roles Affected:
 - All Staff including Agency Workers
 - Registered Manager
- 2.2 People Affected:
 - Service Users
- 2.3 Stakeholders Affected:
 - Family
 - Advocates
 - Representatives
 - Commissioners
 - External health professionals
 - Local Authority
 - NHS/ICB

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, including Agency Workers, 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 Nursing Direct.
- 4.2 Nursing Direct understands that 'Continuity of Care' means that the Service User must have the minimum number of changes of staff including Agency Workers in order to minimise disruption to their routines and ensure consistency and quality of care.

A Clinical Lead must also be allocated for each Service User.

- 4.3 Each Service User will be offered staff including Agency Workers who are matched to them in order to meet their needs, expectations and wishes. Nursing Direct will do this by following NICE guidelines ensuring that:
 - The Service User is supported to develop a professional relationship with staff including Agency Workers and Nursing Direct so that Nursing Direct 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 staff, including Agency Workers before the care starts
 - There are sufficient numbers of staff including Agency Workers to build a team Staff including Agency Workers around the Service User
 - The Service User is informed in advance if staff, including Agency 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, staff including Agency 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 Nursing Direct will maintain a clear register of staff including Agency Workers Staff including Agency 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 UK GDPR, data protection requirements.

4.5 Where Service Users are assessed as lacking mental capacity, Nursing Direct will ensure that the Mental Capacity Act policies and procedures at Nursing Direct including best interests are adhered to, that staff including Agency Workers coordinating the care prioritise the need to ensure consistency of care and that additional measures are in place to ensure that Staff including Agency Workers adhere to the agreed Care Plan and schedule.

4.6 Nursing Direct will comply with any contractual requirements in terms of the numbers of Staff including Agency 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. Nursing Direct will ensure that partnership working is effective and in line with UK GDPR, data protection guidelines.

For Service Users living in their own homes, Nursing Direct 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 Nursing Direct 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 including Agency Workers coordinating the care are struggling to allocate regular Staff including Agency 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.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 Nursing Direct will plan for a reasonable number of Staff including Agency 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 Nursing Direct can safely meet the Service User's needs and promote continuity of care.

All Service Users will be allocated a Clinical Lead and a Care Consultant. Their role is to support the Service User, ensuring that robust communication is in place between the Service User and Nursing Direct and supporting communication between other healthcare professionals. The Clinical Lead and Care Consultant roles are designed to enable the Service User to have familiarity with key staff including Agency Workers and yet still allow for the operational management of meeting the needs of the Service User with different Staff including Agency Workers.

Nursing Direct recognises the importance of having a Clinical Lead and a Care Consultant for the continuity of care for Service Users.

5.2 Keyworker System

Nursing Direct will match the requirements of the Service User with the most suitable Staff including Agency Workers.

Nursing Direct will communicate this information to the Service User and any family members, informing them of the name of the Staff including Agency Workers and the time and dates of their visit, prior to their arrival.

Nursing Direct will not make unnecessary changes to the identified Clinical Lead or Care Consultant, and they will only be changed for legitimate reasons, such as:

- Sickness, annual leave, training or being a Nursing Direct leaver
- The needs of the Service User have changed and those identified do not have the necessary skills to provide the service
- Those identified are unavailable for specific times or additional hours The Service User requests a change of Clinical Lead or Care Consultant
- There are professional boundaries issues Safeguarding concerns arise

5.3 Staff including Agency Worker Allocation

Staff, including Agency Workers, will be matched to the Service User following an assessment of the Service User's needs. Staff including Agency Workers 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 Staff including Agency Workers, and this decision must be respected and accepted. Service Users must be asked if they would like Staff including Agency Workers of the same gender.

Staff including Agency Workers assigned to the Service User must have an understanding of the Service User's particular needs and abilities.

5.4 Staff including Agency Worker Management

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

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

- The Service User explains that the relationship is not working
- The staff including Agency Worker leaves Nursing Direct
- The staff, including Agency 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 staff, including Agency Worker, do 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
- Staff including Agency 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 Nursing Direct having effective communication channels. Nursing Direct will have local systems in place to promote effective communication between Staff including Agency Workers in order to maintain the current understanding of Service Users' needs.

Nursing Direct will ensure that all relevant staff including Agency Workers are aware of these communication channels. Systems will be subject to ongoing review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, effective and ensure they are in line with UK GDPR, data protection policies and procedures.

Systems identified include, but are not limited to:

- Handover procedure between Nursing Direct and the staff including Agency Workers caring for the Service User
- Care Plan and Service User daily visit records
- Communications with other healthcare professionals, e.g. pharmacists, GP
- Nursing Direct will have a system in place to ensure that any changes in the staff including Agency Worker are communicated to the Service User before the visit is due to take place
- Nursing Direct 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
- Where the Staff including Agency Workers are 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
- Staff including Agency Workers will all carry their identification badges and show them to the Service User when they arrive
- Nursing Direct will conduct regular audits on consistency of care to ensure that Service Users are not having too many changes of staff including Agency Workers

5.6 Transferring Between Providers

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, Nursing Direct 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 the 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 including Agency Workers will refer to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 Policy and Procedure at Nursing Direct.

Transfer of Care

In the event of the Service User transferring to another provider, Nursing Direct 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 file once Nursing Direct is made aware
- Ongoing visits will be recorded within the Care Plans and communicated to the relevant Staff including Agency Workers, with contact details clearly documented
- Systems will be in place to easily identify communications taking place between staff including Agency Workers 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

Nursing Direct must ensure that staff including Agency Workers understand the Late and Missed Visits Policy and Procedure at Nursing Direct and as a minimum:

- Staff including Agency Workers must avoid missing any planned visits. They will be aware that missing visits can have serious implications for the Service User's health and wellbeing
- Nursing Direct 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
 - Giving the staff including Agency Workers 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 Nursing Direct and discuss during monitoring meetings
- Ensure that staff, including Agency Workers, contact Nursing Direct if they are late or unable to visit, with plenty of notice, so that Nursing Direct can inform the Service User

5.9 Record Keeping

- Staff including Agency Workers 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 and where appropriate, in line with the UK GDPR and data protection policies and procedures
- Staff including Agency Workers must document any changes to the Service User and contact Nursing Direct immediately to ensure good communication and ensure that any action required can be undertaken
- Staff including Agency Workers can refer to the Care Plan and record-keeping policies at Nursing Direct for further information

5.10 Training

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

5.11 Recruitment

Nursing Direct will consider values-based recruitment to ensure that staff including Agency Workers values align with the values and ethos of Nursing Direct.

The recruitment pipeline must be regularly reviewed to ensure that there are sufficient pools of staff including Agency Workers to meet the needs of the Service Users. Consideration must be given to any cultural or language requirements to ensure that staff, including Agency Workers, 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 staff, including Agency Workers and themes shared at meetings. Audits will be used to drive continuing reviews of practice and quality assurance
- Nursing Direct will seek feedback from Service Users, their families and visiting professionals about communications in Nursing Direct 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

6. DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

6.1 Staff including Agency Workers

6.1.1 Staff

Denotes the employees of Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited.

6.1.2 Agency Workers

Refers to individuals who are contracted with Nursdoc Limited or another employment business as an Agency Worker (temporary worker) provided to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited to perform care services under the direction of Nursing Direct.

6.2 Nursing Direct

Nursing Direct, also known as Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, is the entity regulated by the CQC (Care Quality Commission) and responsible for the care service provision, contracted to provide homecare services to service users in their homes, in placements, essential healthcare facilities and in the community.

6.3 Nursdoc Limited

As the sister company to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, Nursdoc Limited acts as an employment business, specialising in providing staffing solutions to the healthcare sector.

6.4 CQC (Care Quality Commission)

CQC throughout this policy, the term "CQC" refers to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which is the independent regulator of health and social care in England.

6.5 Continuity of Care / Support

Continuity of care/support means ensuring that the same, regular Staff including Agency Workers are allocated to the Service User. Service Users will ideally have a pool of Staff including Agency Workers whom they are familiar with in order to ensure 'continuity of care/support'

6.6 Keyworker

A key worker's role is to understand the 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


6.7 Values Based Recruitment

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

OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

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

- Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited has an awareness of best practice documents in relation to continuity of care
- Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited has a robust recruitment strategy which enables the matching of Staff including Agency Workers to Service Users and sufficient pools of suitably skilled and qualified Staff including Agency Workers
- Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited has sufficient numbers of staff including Agency Workers coordinating the Care in Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited with the knowledge and skills to respond to the challenges of managing a Care rota effectively
- Care Plans and risk assessments are clear, current, and meet the needs of the Service Users
- Service Users know who their Staff, including Agency Workers, are and when they are due to visit
- Thematic audits are completed to review compliance with this policy and procedures. Where actions are identified, these are discussed with staff including Agency Workers, changes made and embedded in practice

COMPLETED DATE:	24.04.2026
SIGN OFF DATE:	29.04.2026
REVIEW DATE:	29.04.2027
SIGNED:	 Marc Stiff – Group Managing Director