



NCHA Keyholding Service Guideline

Scope

Definition of Keyholding Service:- Service whereby the Clinical Homecare Company (or delivery driver or other employee of the Clinical Homecare Company) retains a key or other method for gaining unaccompanied access to a private residence to allow access the patients home to make deliveries, rotate stock and/or remove waste.

Context:- This service has been offered in the past and still is requested for a small number of patients. Some tender specifications still require this to be offered by participating Clinical Homecare Companies.

Issues:- There is increasing nervousness about offering these service or being required to do so in NHS contracts. Obtaining insurance cover for these types of activities is problematic because of the high risk that this activity poses. These are potential issues related to patient confidentiality and safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children. The provision of such a service places the Clinical Homecare Company and their employees at risk of accusation of theft, damage to property or other unacceptable behaviour. It is felt by NCHA Member Companies that other than in exceptional circumstances, the Keyholding Service adds little benefit to the patient that cannot be achieved by other means.

In order to provide a clinical homecare service, it is often necessary for Clinical Homecare Employee to enter patient's homes. In the vast majority of cases, the patient or carer will be able to consent to each entry by opening the door and inviting the Employee into their home.

The provision of a Key-Holding Service for an individual patient is not a normal part of the Clinical Homecare Service and represents a specific agreement between the Company and the patient. Such services are provided entirely at the patient's own risk and must only be provided with the patient's informed consent. Only when all other alternatives have been ruled out should the Clinical Homecare Company consider providing a Key Holding Service to an individual patient. In cases where the patient is unable to agree to an alternative to the Key-Holding Service the patient may be considered as not suitable to receive the Homecare Service and the Clinical Homecare Company has the right to refuse to provide such a service.

If the patient is not the owner or person responsible for the property, then that person must also give informed consent prior to the service being provided. The patient or person responsible for the property must be able to withdraw their consent at any time.

Criteria for Keyholding Service

The Clinical Homecare Company must:-

- Document the Keyholding Service including risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies
- Have full documented and approved processes and procedures covering all aspects of the Keyholding Service
- Maintain a log of keys and alarm/access codes and ensure that they know under whose control the keys and alarm/access codes are at all times

- Store any keys and alarm/access codes securely and with restricted access on a need to know basis
- Not make additional copies of keys provided the patient and/or person responsible for the property without the express authority of the patient and person responsible for the property
- Ensure keys and alarm/access codes are identifiable, being linked to the patient via a code which does not identify the patient's name or address except to approved Employees
- Control the issue keys and alarm/access codes to approved employees solely for the purpose of delivering the Clinical Homecare Service
- Control the return of issued keys to the secure key store as soon as practical after delivery of the Clinical Homecare Service
- Receive informed consent from each patient showing that the patient understands
 - who will have access to the keys and alarm/access codes (including name and photograph or other means of identification)
 - when the keys will be issued and returned to the secure store
 - how the keys will be kept safe during the time they are issued for use
 - how security of alarm/access codes will be maintained
 - how the Employee will announce they have arrived and entered the property in case someone is home
 - what areas of the home will be accessed by the Employee
 - what the Employee will do whilst in the home
 - that they should report any incidents or concerns to their Clinical Homecare Co-ordinator
 - they may withdraw consent to the Keyholding Service at any time and how to withdraw their consent
 - in case they withdraw consent or no longer require the Keyholding Service, how the keys will be returned to them
- Perform a Home Risk Assessment before or at the time of the first entry to the home (e.g. sticking door which must be pushed firmly to ensure the locks engage or delivery to be unloaded into a fridge in a locked outbuilding with no access to the main house)
- Ensure that Employees providing the Keyholding Service and particularly those performing Home Risk Assessments are competent to perform the activities
- Return all relevant keys within 48 hours of request by the patient or person responsible for the property
- Inform the patient and person responsible for the premises immediately in case where there is any risk that security of keys may have been compromised so they can take any necessary steps to ensure security is maintained e.g. changing locks
- Co-operate fully with an investigation by the police of any incident relating to unauthorised entry to a property to which the Company is a Keyholder

Employees delivering the Keyholding Services must:-

- Have access to the latest patient specific home risk assessment
- Review and update the patient specific home risk assessment after each patient home entry if circumstances have change
- Have a recent enhanced CRB check or ISA registration as appropriate
- Only enter a patient's home for the purpose of delivering the Clinical Homecare Service
- Only access areas of the home necessary for the delivery of the Clinical Homecare Services as agreed in advance with the patient
- Report any incidents, damage or concerns related to the Keyholding Service immediately to the Company's Clinical Homecare Co-ordinator
- Hold keys and alarm or access codes securely and for the minimum time needed to provide the Clinical Homecare Service