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# Poliicy on CONTINUITY OF CARE FOR SUPPORT WORKERS

Document Details

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**Policy Statement**

This document sets out the circumstance of a change of staff from their regular member duties. This occurs for all sorts of reasons, but particularly when a member of staff is ill. This charity believes that in order to deliver a quality of service, continuity of care is paramount. This policy sets out when changes would need to be made.

This document outlines the procedures of this charity in relation to the circumstances in which a change of a member’s care/support workers might be unavoidable.

**The Policy**

In order to comply fully with the New Fundamental Standard Regulations, this charity must organise staff and staff duties in order that sufficient numbers of experienced, skilled and competent staff are on duty at all times.

* The Registered Manager has to take sufficient steps to ensure that at all times there are sufficient numbers of suitably qualified skilled and experienced staff for the purposes of carrying out the regulated activity.
* This means that staff sickness, absence and holiday cover must be planned and managed in order that the member/service delivery is not compromised.
* It also means taking into account the needs and preferences of our members in order to ensure that services delivered meet their needs.
* This includes, when necessary, ensuring taking account of any fluctuating needs.

**General Rules for Replacing Staff**

The Service Lead or team leader(Service Co-Ordinator) who has to arrange for a replacement member of staff, should observe the following general rules:

* Consult the member or their representative if possible and if time permits. This is advisable in every case, but is dependent upon circumstances.
* Always, unless the previous worker was found to be unsatisfactory, use a worker who as near as possible replicates the skills, experience and knowledge of the worker being replaced.
* If the member has several workers supplying service, consider whether one of the other existing workers could be available; this could be made possible by extending hours or by shifting from other duties, but avoid setting off chains of changes that disrupt other members.
* If the member has had other workers in the past, and was content with them, consider whether they could be available.
* Ensure that the newly-allocated worker is briefed both by you and, if feasible, by the worker being replaced.
* If there is time, ensure that the newly-allocated worker receives appropriate specialist training before starting to provide service, or as soon after as possible.
* Apologise, express sympathy and as far as possible provide support to the member and their carer or representative throughout the process.
* In cases where a member has communication or comprehension difficulties, take special care to ensure, as far as possible, that they understand what is happening, and that the position has been explained to the member’s relative or representative if there is one.
* In cases where a member is receiving substantial help from a carer(support worker), ensure that the situation is fully explained to the carer as well as to the member.
* Remember that obligations exist to staff as well as to members. In particular, be careful not to reveal confidential information about a staff member.
* In communicating with a member or their representative, always consider whether it would be best for a care(support) worker who is familiar with the member to carry out this function on the company’s behalf.

**Specific Reasons for Making a Change**

**Worker is unavailable at short notice**

Most sickness absence is unpredictable, so quick action is likely to be needed to fill the gap created by the non-availability of a worker. An attempt should be made to work out how long the absence is likely to be and to make a plan to cover the whole period rather than proceeding on a day-to-day basis. An absence arising from special or compassionate leave should be similarly handled.

**Worker on holiday or training**

It should usually be possible to anticipate absences resulting from holidays or training, to make careful replacement plans and to explain the situation fully to the member in advance.

**Worker leaves the charity**

It should usually be possible to anticipate absences resulting from a worker leaving the charity, to make careful replacement plans and to explain the situation fully to the member in advance. (doesn’t make sense to me.)

**Sudden, unpredicted need to change worker permanently**

If a worker, for example, leaves the charity without notice or it becomes necessary to change a worker urgently for any of the reasons listed, quick action is likely to be needed to fill the gap. Consideration should be given as to whether it is possible to make an alternative long-term arrangement immediately, or whether a temporary arrangement is necessary until a more satisfactory long-term replacement can be available.

**Service requirements change in ways that make it impossible for the worker to continue**

If a situation arises in which it becomes apparent that a worker does not have the necessary skills, physical capacity or training to deal with a member’s changed needs, or cannot be available for additional hours or changed times, it should usually be possible to anticipate the development and make planned arrangements for a replacement. If not, the point above applies.

**Member requests a change of support worker**

If the member requests a change of worker, the manager(service lead) should of course explore the reasons. In most cases, since we always aim to meet members’ requirements, the request should be met. Even if the request seems unreasonable, it may be wise to make a change as the relationship with the existing worker may deteriorate further. Only if the request seems flippant or if there are repeated requests, should we hesitate to comply with a member’s wishes. Before making the change the manager(service lead) should: discuss the request with the worker to obtain as full a picture as possible; support the worker, if appropriate; and, if the worker was indeed unsatisfactory, to initiate any other necessary action, for example, further training, increased support or supervision, or, in serious cases, discipline. Subject to some discretion, the manager(service lead) should confidentially brief the replacement worker on what happened.

**A non-professional relationship has developed**

If a non-professional relationship has developed between a member and a worker, it is usually necessary to act swiftly, but the member should still be consulted as fully as possible about the replacement. The manager(service lead) should then assess whether the incident should lead to further training, or disciplinary or other action in respect of the worker and, subject to some discretion, should confidentially brief the replacement worker on what happened.

**An assignment causes severe stress for a worker**

If it is necessary to relieve a worker because of the stress the assignment generates, the situation should usually be anticipated and a carefully planned replacement introduced with full consultation. The new worker should, of course, be confidentially briefed on what has happened and, if appropriate, be provided with additional support. Careful consideration should be given to the future workload and support needs of the worker replaced.

**Worker suffers abuse or discrimination**

If a worker suffers abuse or discrimination to an extent that they need to withdraw from a member, the manager(service lead) should thoroughly explore the situation and consider whether the charity can continue to provide a service. If it is decided to continue, any replacement worker should be thoroughly briefed on the risks in the situation. The member or their representative should still be consulted as fully as possible about the replacement, but they should be warned that any recurrence of the abuse or discrimination may prejudice the continuance of the service.

**Related Policies**

Dignity and Respect

Equality and Diversity

Meeting Needs

Responsive Services