ST MARTIN OF TOURS
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

St Martins
Moving forward together

Domiciliary Care and Supported Living Service

Service User Handbook

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Welcome to St Martins' Domiciliary Care service!

WHAT IS OUR DOMICILIARY CARE SERVICE?

- **Domiciliary Care means** receiving care and support in your own home rather than in a residential facility. St Martins' domiciliary care service is designed to help you live safely and independently, while managing your mental and physical health needs. Our team members come to you at agreed times to assist with day-to-day tasks, personal care, and whatever you need support with. We will work alongside you at a pace that feels right for you, building your confidence and independence.

- At St Martins, our approach to care is **person-centred, trauma-informed, and recovery-focused.** This means we see you as an individual and tailor our support to your personal needs and goals. We understand that you may have had difficult or traumatic experiences in the past, so we always strive to provide care in a way that helps you feel safe, respected, and in control. Our support focuses on your strengths and hopes for the future (often called a **strengths-based** approach). We believe in your ability to make progress in your recovery journey.

WHAT CAN DOMICILIARY CARE HELP WITH?

- Depending on your situation, our service can assist you in many areas, for example: - Support with daily living tasks and self-care (such as helping with meals, household tasks, or prompts with personal hygiene and medication). - Support with your mental health and emotional well-being (like coping strategies, talking through challenges, or managing routines). - Helping you attend appointments, activities, or social events in the community. - Supporting you with skills for independent living, education, or work (for instance, budgeting, cooking, or finding volunteering opportunities).

- **Our service is regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC),** which means we follow high standards for quality and safety. You can expect professional and compassionate staff who respect your dignity and rights at all times. Domiciliary care is collaborative – we work **with you**, not just **for you.** We encourage you to do as much as you can for yourself, and we assist where you need help. The goal is to empower you to live the life you want, with the right support in place.

THE ROLE OF YOUR KEY WORKER

When you begin receiving our care service, you will be assigned a key worker. Your key worker is the main staff member responsible for coordinating and delivering your support. Think of them as your primary point of contact and advocate within our team. They are there to make sure your needs are met and your voice is heard.

WHAT DOES YOUR KEY WORKER DO?

- Get to know you and build a trusting, professional relationship. They will take the time to understand your history, preferences, and what matters to you.
- Work with you to create and review your support plan. They will help you identify your goals and the steps to achieve them.
- Meet with you regularly (as per your plan to talk about how things are going.
- Coordinate with other professionals involved in your care. For instance, your key worker can communicate with your social worker, doctor, therapist, or any external services (with your consent) to make sure everyone is working together in your best interest.
- Provide support and guidance for day-to-day issues. If you have a concern or question, your key worker is the person you can turn to first. They will either help directly or find the right help for you.
- Empower you and help you work towards greater independence

Support planning is a collaborative process where you and your key worker design a plan for your care and support.

This **Support Plan** is a written document (sometimes also called a care plan) that outlines what you want to achieve and how we will help you get there. It's personal to you – no two plans are the same, because everyone's needs and goals are different.

How does support planning work?

It starts when you first join a St Martin's service!

We begin with an initial assessment of your needs, strengths, and any risks (more on risk in the next section). This usually happens during referral and in your first days with the service. We will ask you about various aspects of your life – for example, your health, daily routine, support network, and what you feel you need help with. We do this with you, and if you like, you can involve a family member, friend, or advocate in this process.

Based on this assessment, an interim support plan might be created very quickly (especially if you have urgent needs) to ensure you have the right support in place immediately. This interim plan covers the basics and keeps you safe while we take time to develop a more detailed plan.

Within no later than about 10 working days, your comprehensive support plan will be developed together with your key worker. This is a more in-depth plan covering all relevant areas of support.

A glance through key parts of your support plan

- **Your personal goals and objectives:** What do you want to achieve? This could be anything important to you, big or small – for example, improving your cooking skills, managing your anxiety better, reconnecting with family, or planning to move to more independent housing in the future. We'll break down goals into achievable steps.

- **Support actions:** For each goal or need, we'll outline what support will be provided. This includes who will help you (key worker or other staff/professionals), how often, and in what way. For instance, "Key worker will visit every morning to assist with medication and breakfast planning," or "Support worker will accompany you to the gym twice a week."

- **Your strengths and preferences:** We make note of what you're good at and what you enjoy. Building on your strengths (like a hobby or skill you have) can be a great way to reach your goals. We also include any preferences you have in how support is given (for example, times of day that suit you, communication needs, cultural or religious considerations).

- **Areas of concern or needs:** These are the issues you want help with or that we need to keep an eye on. They might include mental health symptoms, physical health conditions, social isolation, daily living skills, etc. We address how to manage or improve each of these.

- **Resources and other agencies:** If you have input from other services (like a therapist, probation officer, or community nurse), the plan will mention them and how we all coordinate. We make sure everyone involved knows their role and is working toward common goals with you.

- **Review schedule:** We set dates or timeframes for reviewing your plan. Typically, we review your support plan with you at least every three months (quarterly). However, reviews can happen any time if your situation changes or if you feel something isn't working and want to adjust it. You don't have to wait – you or your key worker can request a review whenever needed.

Residents lead their support

Recovery-focused approach

Holistic well-being

Confidential

RISK AND SAFETY PLANNING

As part of planning your support, we also work with you on **risk assessments** and **safety plans**. This is about identifying anything that could cause harm to you or to others, and figuring out the best ways to keep you (and everyone) safe while you work toward your goals. Being safe doesn't mean avoiding everything that's challenging – it means understanding risks and managing them smartly.

What is a Risk Assessment?

It is a careful look at anything in your life or environment that might be unsafe or put you at risk of harm.

- Health risks (e.g. risk of seizures, side effects from medication), self-harm, mental health crises.
- Safety in the home(risk of falls, fire hazards, difficulties with using cooking appliances safely).
- Risks in the community (getting lost when out, or encountering people who might take advantage of you)
- Financial risks (potential for others to exploit you financially)
- Behaviours that could be risky (alcohol or drugs, aggression)
- Any history of offending or behaviours that might pose a risk to others, if applicable.

Nothing about you without you!

You will be involved as much as possible in identifying and deciding how to handle risks.
We will ask what you consider to be risky for yourself and what you're comfortable with or worried about.
Together, we develop a **risk management plan** as part of your support plan.

WHAT DOES A RISK MANAGEMENT OR SAFETY PLAN INCLUDE?

We follow a **"positive risk-taking"** philosophy. This means we understand that taking some risks is a normal part of life can be essential for growth. Rather than wrapping you in cotton wool, we want to support you to make informed decisions about risks. We will never force you to do something risky, but if you decide to pursue something that has risks (like starting a new relationship, or traveling independently, or trying a new activity), we will help you do it as safely as possible.

We weigh the benefits and the risks together. For instance, going out to a busy place might make you anxious (risk of stress), but it could also build your confidence and independence – so we'd plan ways to minimize the stress (maybe have a staff go with you the first few times or have a phone on you) rather than forbid it. We believe in your right to take reasonable risks as part of living your life, as long as it's done with planning and safety nets.

We take a **balanced, proportionate approach** – meaning we will not over-react to minor risks but we will not ignore serious dangers either.

The aim is to keep you safe while respecting your freedom and choices.
If at any point you are unable to make decisions about your safety our team will act in your best interests to protect you in line with the Mental Capacity Act, which means we will involve people who care about you and professionals to decide the least restrictive, safest plan until you regain capacity.
We always prefer to plan ahead: if you have fluctuating capacity, we'll discuss in advance what you would want us to do in certain situations.

Remember that the key of staying safe is **good communication**. Please always feel free to tell your key worker or staff if something is worrying you or if you feel unsafe doing something. Likewise, we will communicate with you about any concerns we have and explain why we suggest certain safety measures. It's a two-way conversation aimed at protecting you without taking away your independence.

YOUR RIGHTS

A Privacy

Your home is your personal space, and we consider ourselves guests when we visit. Staff will only enter your home with your consent (a scheduled visit). We will respect your personal boundaries and belongings and your personal information (including your support plan and records) will be kept confidential.

B Involvement & Choice

You have the right to be involved in all decisions about your care and support. We will seek your input and consent for any support we provide. You can make choices about your daily routine, activities, and goals. Where choices are limited we will be transparent about why and work with you to find acceptable alternatives.

C Information

You have the right to clear information about our service, your support, and any terms or rules. We provide you with this handbook and you can ask for any of our policies or procedures if you're interested. We will explain things in plain language and make sure you understand what to expect.

D Quality of Care

You have the right to receive safe, high-quality care that meets your needs. Our staff are trained and qualified to support you. You have the right to ask for a preferred staff member and we will do our best to accommodate reasonable requests.

E Dignity & Equality

You have the right to be treated as a valued individual, without discrimination. St Martins has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of abuse or unlawful discrimination. This means we will not tolerate staff (or other service users) treating you poorly because of your race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor.

F Safety

You have the right to feel safe and be protected from harm. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure your safety while you are using our service. If you don't feel safe in a certain situation, you can refuse or request changes – your safety and comfort come first.

G Feedback & Complaints

You have the right to give feedback or complain without it affecting your care. We encourage you to tell us what's going well or not well. Everyone's feedback is used to improve our service.

H Support to exercise your rights

If you have trouble understanding or using your rights we can help connect you with an advocate. An advocate is an independent person who can help you express your wishes and make sure you are heard. You also have the right to involve a family member or friend in your care planning or meetings if you wish.

Respect for Staff

Please treat our care staff and any other professionals with courtesy and respect. Our team is dedicated to helping you, and they should not be subjected to abusive language, threats, or violence. If you ever feel angry or upset with a staff member, you can always request to pause the conversation and perhaps involve a manager to resolve the issue. Mutual respect helps build a trusting relationship.

Participation & Communication

To get the most out of our service, we encourage you to participate actively; working with your key worker on your support plan, attending scheduled meetings or visits, and communicating openly about how you feel. If something isn't working for you, or if you feel your needs have changed, please let us know. We rely on your input to adjust your support. If you cannot attend a planned visit or you need to reschedule a session, please inform us as soon as possible to allow further adjustments.

Respect for Others' Rights

Your rights end where others begin. It is imperative to be mindful of others rights to dignity, privacy and respect. .

Safety in the Home

Since staff will be coming into your home, it's your responsibility to maintain a reasonably safe environment and not put staff in danger. If you smoke, we ask that you don't smoke indoors during visits and ensure proper ventilation. If you have pets, please secure them away. We will also do basic safety checks with you (with your permission) and advise if we spot hazards.

Follow Agreed Plans

Your support plan will have certain actions that you've agreed to, such as taking your medication as prescribed, or practicing certain coping techniques, or attending an appointment. We ask that you try your best to follow through on your part of the plan. If you're struggling with something, tell your key worker. We expect honesty and our goal is to support you, not to force you.

Property & Resources

Looking after any equipment or resources we provide for your use. For instance, if we loan you an assistive device or a phone, use it responsibly and let us know if it breaks. If a staff is helping with shopping or handling your money at your request, make sure to count and agree on money exchanged to avoid misunderstandings. This protects both you and the staff.

SAFEGUARDING AND STAYING SAFE

Safeguarding means protecting people from abuse, harm, or neglect.
St Martins is committed to safeguarding every person who uses our service obstructing any form of abuse or neglect.

What is Abuse?

Abuse can be any action (or inaction) that harms you or violates your rights. It can happen **anywhere** – at home, in the community, **by anyone** (a stranger, caregiver, family member, another service user, etc.). **Abuse is never your fault**. Types of abuse to be aware of:

- **Physical abuse:** When someone hurts your body on purpose. This includes hitting, pushing, shaking, rough handling, or misuse of medication or restraint.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse:** When someone uses words or behaviours to control, frighten, or humiliate you. This could be yelling, threatening, constantly criticizing you, isolating you from others, or manipulating you.
- **Sexual abuse**: Any sexual activity with you without your full consent. This includes unwanted touching, rape, sexual harassment, or being forced to watch sexual content. If you are not sure something was consensual, you can always talk to a professional about it.
- **Financial abuse**: When someone takes or misuses your money or belongings without permission. Examples are stealing your money or valuables, controlling your bank account, or pressuring you to buy or give them things.
- **Neglect**: If someone who is supposed to support or care for you fails to do so, and you're harmed as a result. This could be a caregiver not providing you food, heat, medication, or assistance you need.
- **Discrimination**: Abuse can also be when someone mistreats you or belittles you because of who you are – due to your mental health diagnosis, disability, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or age. Slurs, unequal treatment, or hate crimes fall in this category.
- **Exploitation**: This is when someone takes advantage of you. It could be sexual exploitation, financial exploitation, or making you do things for them that you don't want to (forced labour or crime).
- **Self-neglect**: When a person isn't taking care of their own basic needs, possibly due to mental health issues or other problems. If we see that you are not able to care for yourself (not eating, living in unsafe conditions, etc.), we consider it a safeguarding concern too because you might be at serious risk. We would step in to find support for you.

St Martins has a **zero-tolerance** policy toward abuse. Our staff are trained to spot the signs of abuse. If a staff member or anyone connected to our service suspects that you (or any other client) are being abused or are at risk of abuse, they are required to act on it. Usually, they will discuss it immediately with their manager or our safeguarding lead. We have clear procedures to follow, which usually involve reporting to the local authority's Safeguarding Adults team. These authorities have the legal powers to investigate and protect individuals from abuse.

WHAT TO EXPECT IF A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN IS RAISED

If we believe you are in danger or are being harmed, our priority is to make you safe. We will:

1. Talk to you about the concern if it's safe to do so. We will listen to what you want and how you'd like the situation to be handled. (**Empowerment** is one of the key safeguarding principles – **your wishes matter**.)
2. Take immediate action if needed. If you were in urgent danger we would call emergency services to intervene right away. In less urgent cases, immediate action could mean separating you from the source of harm, or getting you to a safe place.
3. Report to authorities. By law and policy, we often must report certain concerns to the Adult Safeguarding team (usually part of the local council) or even the police if a crime might have been committed. We will usually inform you that we are doing this. Even if you ask us not to tell anyone, if we truly believe you (or someone else) are at serious risk, we may have to report it. We will explain what we're doing and why. The goal is not to betray trust, but to get you protection.
4. Support you through it. We will continue to support you during any investigation or actions. If the council opens a safeguarding enquiry, a social worker might contact you to discuss what happened. We can be with you during that if you want. We'll also help create a plan to prevent further harm – this might include changes to your support plan, additional services, or other protective measures.
5. Respect your outcome preferences. We will ask what you want to happen. We will relay your wishes to the safeguarding team and try to achieve an outcome you're satisfied with. If you wish to involve police and pursue charges – we will support that too. Safeguarding is **person-led** as much as possible.

STAYING SAFE AND PREVENTING ABUSE

We believe in preventing abuse before it happens. That means we will:

- Give you information about your rights so you recognize if something is wrong.
- Encourage you to speak up if anything or anyone makes you feel unsafe. Even if it's something that happened outside our service, you can still talk to us and we'll try to get you help.
- Maintain professional boundaries. Our staff should always behave professionally and appropriately. They should never ask you for money, gifts, or favours. They should not share their personal problems or overly personal information with you. If any staff member ever behaves in a way that feels unprofessional or makes you uneasy, please let us know.

- Ensure you are never alone with a staff member in a way that makes you feel trapped or at risk. For instance, staff will visit you in your home as scheduled, but if you only feel comfortable with them staying in the living room, that's fine. Any concerns you have in this area please speak to the service manager,
- Work in partnership with other agencies. Sometimes, staying safe involves other people like doctors, social workers, or even law enforcement. We share information with relevant professionals on a need-to-know basis to protect you (following confidentiality rules). For example, if you have a history of someone abusing you, we might alert your social worker to be extra vigilant. Or if there's a known scam targeting vulnerable people in the area, we might let you know and also inform authorities if needed.

IF YOU HAVE A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN OR ANY WORRY ABOUT ABUSE, HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

Tell your key worker, another staff member or speak with St Martin's Management **immediately.** You can do this in person or by phone. All our staff are trained to handle it calmly and supportively. They will ensure the information gets to the right people to help you. Their contact information is provided in your welcome information.

You could also have a friend or advocate contact us on your behalf.
If you feel in immediate danger, you can also call the police (999 in an emergency).
After things are safe, you can inform us so we can also assist.
Furthermore, you can contact the Local Authority Safeguarding Adults team directly (Every borough has a safeguarding helpline or email – we can provide you the contact for your area on request.) They are there for the public to report concerns too.

- Remember: you should **never** feel you have to keep abuse a **secret**. Even if the person harming you is someone you care about or rely on, **abuse is not OK.** Our priority is your well-being and helping you stay as in control of your life as possible, even in a safeguarding situation.
- If you suspect someone else (like a friend or neighbour, or another service user) is being abused, you should **voice** that **concern**. You can report it to us or directly to authorities. It's always better to speak up than to stay silent and risk the harm continuing.

In summary, safeguarding is everyone's business.

We at St Martins will do everything in our power to protect you and create an environment where you feel safe and empowered. You can help by being aware of what abuse is and letting us know if anything threatens your safety or the safety of others.

FEEDBACK & SUGGESTIONS

Do you have an idea that could make our service better?
Did a staff member do something you really appreciate?
Is there something you wish we did differently?

Please let us know! Here are some easy ways to give feedback or suggestions

Talk to your key worker or any staff member: The simplest way is to just tell a staff in person or by phone. You can do this informally at any time. Staff will pass on your comments to the team and management.

"I REALLY FOUND THAT LAST WORKSHEET HELPFUL, THANK YOU."

"I WISH THE APPOINTMENTS WAS LATER IN THE MORNING BECAUSE I STRUGGLE TO WAKE UP EARLY."

Suggestion forms or surveys

We periodically provide feedback forms or an annual survey where you can write down your thoughts anonymously if you prefer. If you're given a form or a link to a survey, we'd love your input. If not, you can always request a feedback form from our office.

Email or letter: You can email the service manager or write a letter with your feedback. Feel free to express anything you want to share.

Compliments: If a particular staff member or aspect of the service has really helped you, we're sure they'd be happy to hear it. You can direct compliments to the staff themselves or to their manager. It boosts morale and helps us know what we're doing right.

In meetings or reviews: Whenever you have a support plan review or a house meeting (if applicable) or any forum with staff, you can bring up suggestions. For example, if you meet with a manager occasionally, they will often ask, "How are you finding the service? Is there anything we can do better?"

We welcome all feedback – positive, negative, or neutral. Don't hesitate because you think it's too small or too big. Even small suggestions (like "can we change the time of...?") can often be accommodated. And bigger concerns are important for us to hear early on so we can address them.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

A complaint is a specific type of feedback where you are dissatisfied with some aspect of the service or how you have been treated, and you want it formally addressed. You have every right to complain if you're unhappy. We view complaints as an opportunity to fix problems and improve quality. You will not get in trouble or lose services for making a complaint – as long as it's made honestly and respectfully, we are absolutely fine with it.

Steps to raise a complaint:

1. Talk to staff (optional but often helpful): If you feel comfortable, you might first bring up the issue with your key worker and give us a chance to resolve it quickly. Many problems can be resolved through a conversation.

2. Make a formal complaint **(Stage 1)**: To make an official complaint, you can do any of the following:

- Fill out a **complaint form**. Write down what happened, why you are unhappy, and what you would like to see done about it. If you need help writing it, staff can assist you or you can ask an advocate or friend to help.
- **Write a letter or email** to the Service Manager. Make sure to include your name, the date, and clear details of your complaint (what occurred, when, who was involved, and what you'd like as an outcome).
- **Tell a senior staff member or manager** in person or by phone that you want to make a formal complaint. They will take notes and ask you for all the details to log the complaint.

Once we receive your complaint, we will acknowledge it, usually **within 5 working days.** This means we'll confirm we got it and may clarify our understanding of the issue. Then, a manager will investigate the complaint. This might involve talking to you more, speaking with any staff involved, reviewing records, etc. We aim to give you a written response with the outcome of the investigation **within 10 working days**. If for some reason we need more time to investigate (maybe a key person is on leave, or the issue is complex), we will let you know and give you an updated timeline. Our response letter will explain what we found and what we will do about it. We will always try to be clear and fair in our response. The outcome could be that we uphold your complaint (agree something went wrong and fix it), partially uphold it, or not uphold it (if we found things were done properly, we'll explain why). Regardless, we'll tell you the next steps.

STAGE 2-FORMAL COMPLAINT

If not satisfied, escalate the complaint (Stage 2).

We hope to resolve things at Stage 1, but if you read our response and you're not happy with the result, you have the right to have the complaint reviewed at a higher level. To do this, you usually need to inform us (the service manager or the complaints coordinator) that you are still dissatisfied and want to go to "Stage 2". You should do this within a certain time (usually within **20 working days** of getting our first response, but the timeline will be stated in the response letter).

At Stage 2, a senior manager or someone not directly involved in the case will review your complaint and how it was handled. They may even assign an independent investigator. They will look at any new information or anything you feel was overlooked. Stage 2 is basically an appeal of the Stage 1 outcome. We aim to send you a final decision within 20 working days of acknowledging the Stage 2 request. If it takes longer, again, we will keep you informed.

External review: We sincerely hope we can resolve your concerns internally. However, if after the Stage 2 response you still feel your complaint hasn't been resolved, you have the option to take it to an independent ombudsman. There are two ombudsman services that might be relevant:

- **The Housing Ombudsman Service** – deals with housing-related complaints for tenants of housing associations (if your complaint is more about housing or landlord issues).
- **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)** – deals with complaints about adult social care services (which would include the care service we provide).

We will advise you which ombudsman is appropriate, depending on the nature of your complaint. You typically need to wait either until you've been through our two stages, or if it's been **over 8 weeks** since you first raised the complaint with us and it's still not resolved. After that, you can directly contact the ombudsman. They will impartially investigate if we handled your complaint properly and make recommendations. We will provide you with the contact details for the ombudsman in our final response letter, or you can ask us anytime.

Throughout the complaint process, we promise to:

1. Treat you fairly and without bias. Your care will continue as normal. Staff are expected to maintain a professional attitude – no one is allowed to take a complaint personally and treat you poorly because of it. If you ever felt you were being treated unfairly after complaining, that would be a serious issue and you should report it.
2. Keep your complaint confidential. Only the people who need to know about it (like those investigating or responding) will be involved. Other clients or unrelated staff won't be told about your private matters.
3. Help you make a complaint if needed. If you have difficulty expressing yourself or writing, we can arrange someone to help write down your words. We can also provide interpreters or translated materials if English isn't your preferred language.

Thank You for reading your Domiciliary Care Handbook.

WE HOPE THIS HANDBOOK HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT TO EXPECT FROM ST MARTINS AND HOW WE WILL WORK TOGETHER.

www.stmartinoftours.org.uk

Ferrini House Reception: 0203 105 3949