

Chronic Illness Home Support Sensitivity & Practice Policy

Empathy and Perspective

When supporting someone with chronic illness, you are expected to begin with empathy.

Look at their life as if it were your own.

Before you enter the home, ask yourself:

- How would I want someone to behave if I were this exhausted?
- What would feel supportive rather than intrusive?
- What would help me feel safe, understood, and respected in my own home?

When you approach support from this perspective, you will naturally bring the right energy, pace and presence into the home.

Purpose

This policy sets out the expectations, approach and sensitivities required when supporting an individual with a chronic illness in their home. It exists to ensure that every visit adds to a client's life rather than takes from it, and that support is delivered with empathy, respect and deep understanding of fluctuating health needs.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and anyone representing the organisation while providing in-home support.

Core Principle: The Visit Is Led by the Client

Every visit must be shaped entirely around what the client wants and needs on that day. Chronic illness is unpredictable. What is manageable one day may be impossible the next.

Support workers must adapt their presence, energy, communication and tasks to the client's condition at the time of the visit.

The goal is not productivity for its own sake, but support that respects limited energy and preserves dignity.

Understanding Chronic Illness

When supporting someone with a chronic illness, you should expect that they may experience:

- Extreme fatigue
- Brain fog (difficulty thinking, processing, or communicating)
- Sensitivity to noise, light, conversation, or movement
- Fluctuating ability to engage socially
- A need for strict infection control

These symptoms are often invisible. A client may appear “fine” while being profoundly unwell.

Infection Awareness and Masks

Clients may ask you to:

- Wear a mask at every visit
- Sanitise hands immediately on arrival
- Avoid visits if you have *any* signs of illness

These requests must be respected without question or discomfort.

For many people with chronic illness, even a minor infection can cause a severe relapse lasting weeks or months. Mask-wearing is not a preference; it is often a necessary protection.

The Client May Be in Bed

It is entirely normal for a client to:

- Remain in bed for the full duration of the visit
- Not greet you in person
- Not wish to be disturbed

This must never be interpreted as disengagement, rudeness or lack of appreciation.

If a client is resting, your role may simply be to quietly complete agreed tasks and leave the home calm and undisturbed.

Communication Expectations

Every client's communication needs will differ, and may change from visit to visit.

You may find that a client:

- Does not want to communicate at all
- Can only manage minimal conversation
- Wants silence
- Wants to talk for the entire visit

All of these are valid.

Important Guidance

- **Do not take silence personally**
- **Do not fill quiet with unnecessary conversation**
- **Be alert to signs of exhaustion caused by talking**

Conversation, even when enjoyable, costs energy. If you are talking more than the client, you may be taking more than you are giving.

The visit is about supporting their life.

Energy Is a Limited Resource

Clients with chronic illness live with a fixed and limited amount of energy.

Your role is to:

- Preserve that energy
- Protect it
- Never drain it unnecessarily

This means:

- Moving calmly and quietly
- Speaking only when needed
- Allowing long pauses
- Accepting brief or no responses

Silence can be a form of care.

Task-Focused Visits

Some visits will be entirely practical.

A client may simply ask you to:

- Complete a list of tasks
- Help with household, admin, or daily needs
- Leave once these are done

This is not a lesser form of support and it is often the most valuable.

Efficiency, gentleness and respect are essential.

Professional Boundaries and Respect

- You are a supportive presence, not a guest
- The home is the client's sanctuary
- Your role is to make life easier, quieter and more manageable

Every action should reduce burden, not add to it.

In Summary

Clients with chronic illness need:

- Quiet
- Understanding
- Consideration
- Flexibility
- Respect for their limits

Support is not measured by conversation or activity, but by how safe, supported and understood the client feels when you leave.

This policy exists to ensure that every visit honours that principle.

Signature:

Date: