



Staffordshire
Social Care
Workforce

CMDT
Care Market Development Team

Call Bell Guide

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Foreword

This guide has been developed to introduce the subject and further research and learning is recommended to provide a complete understanding. Requirements are often unique to individual care services, and you should consider how best to implement practices.

Introduction

A call bell system is a vital communication tool in care homes, allowing residents to alert staff when they need assistance or have an emergency.

A well-functioning call bell system can improve the quality of care and safety of residents, as well as the efficiency and responsiveness of staff. However, a poorly maintained or inadequate call bell system can have serious consequences for the well-being of residents and staff and may lead to complaints or incidents.

Testing Call Bells

It is essential that call bells are tested regularly to ensure that they work properly, and that staff can hear and respond to them promptly. Testing call bells should be part of the routine maintenance and inspection of the care home, and should be done at least once a month, or more frequently if there are any problems or concerns.

Testing call bells should involve the following steps:

- Checking that call bells are in good condition and have no visible damage or defects.
- Checking that call bells are connected to the main system and have a clear signal.
- Checking that call bells have batteries that are fully charged and replaced as needed.
- Checking that call bells have labels or signs that indicate their location and function.
- Pressing each call bell and verifying that it activates a visual and audible alert on the main system and on the staff's devices.
- Recording the date and time of the test, the name of the person who conducted the test, and the results of the test.
- Reporting any issues or faults to the manager or the maintenance team and requesting repairs or replacements as soon as possible.

Accessibility of Call Bells

It is important that call bells are always easily accessible and within the reach of residents, especially in their bedrooms and bathrooms. This allows residents to summon help, without having to rely on others or move from their position.

Ensuring that call bells are in reach of residents involves the following steps:

- Placing call bells in locations that are convenient and visible for residents, such as near their beds, chairs, toilets, sinks, showers, or bathtubs.
- Using call bells that are suitable for the needs and preferences of residents, such as handheld, wall-mounted, wireless, or wearable devices.
- Adjusting the placement of call bells to meet the individual need, taking into account their mobility, dexterity and any visual impairment.
- Providing extra call bells or extensions for residents who have difficulty accessing the main call bell, such as those who use wheelchairs, walkers, or hoists.
- Educating and reminding residents on how to use the call bells and what they are for, and encouraging them to use them when they need assistance or have an emergency.
- Monitoring and observing residents' usage and satisfaction with the call bells and making adjustments or improvements as needed.

When calls bells aren't an option

Some residents may not be able to use a call bell due to physical, mental, or cognitive impairments, such as dementia, stroke, paralysis, or sensory loss. In these cases, it is essential that staff provide regular checks on their well-being and respond to their needs and requests. Providing regular checks on residents who can't use a call bell involves the following steps:

- Identifying and assessing the residents who are unable to use a call bell and the reasons why.
- Developing and implementing a care plan that specifies the frequency and type of checks that each resident requires, based on their individual needs and risks.
- Assigning and scheduling staff members who are responsible for conducting the checks and providing the necessary care and support.
- Documenting and reviewing the outcomes of the checks.
- Using alternative methods of communication and monitoring, such as intercoms, sensors, or alarms, to supplement the checks and alert staff of any issues or emergencies.
- Evaluating and updating the care plan and the methods of communication and monitoring as the residents' conditions and needs change.

Checking accessibility and response times

Response times

Set up a system that records and measures the response time for each call bell, from the moment it is pressed to the moment a staff member arrives at the scene.

To ensure the test is robust, you should:

- Conduct random tests of the response time for call bells at various times of day, such as morning, afternoon, evening, and night.
- Collect and analyse the data on the response time for call bells, such as the average, minimum, maximum, and range of the response time, and the factors that influence the response time.
- Compare the data with your expected response time standard.
- Identify and address any gaps or delays in the response time for call bells, such as by hiring or training more staff, improving the workflow and communication, or upgrading the equipment and infrastructure.

Accessibility

Conduct regular visual checks of call bells to ensure they are accessible. If there are any identified issues that more formal audits might be required.

- Confirm that call bells are within reach for individuals, based on their individual needs. Some people might not be able to reach for a call bell and a cord based call bell could be caught on the environment and be out of reach.
- Undertake checks at different times and on different days to ensure call bells are consistently available.

Creating and implementing an action plan

It is important that care homes conduct regular audits of their call bell systems to evaluate their performance, compliance and utilisation, and to identify and resolve any issues or areas of improvement.

If there are issues identified as part of an audit, creating and implementing an action plan to resolve them involves the following steps:

- Developing and documenting an action plan that outlines the specific actions, timelines, resources, and responsibilities for addressing each issue.
- Implementing and monitoring the action plan and tracking the progress and outcomes of each action.
- Reporting and communicating the results of the action plan to the relevant stakeholders.
- Reviewing and revising the action plan as needed, and incorporating the lessons learned and best practices into the ongoing management and improvement of the call bell system.

Summary

A call bell system is a key component of the quality and safety of care in a care home. Adult social care providers should ensure that their call bell systems are effective, reliable, and accessible for all residents, used by staff, and that they comply with the standards and regulations.

A well-functioning and utilised call bell system can enhance the communication and responsiveness of staff, and the satisfaction and well-being of residents.

For further information,
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