

Control of Scheme Keys and Use of the Key Safe

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1. Summary

The Control of Scheme Keys and Use of the Key Safe policy and procedure sets out Housing 21's principle of ensuring a secure and controlled way of storing, using, and replacing all types of keys at both our extra care and retirement living schemes.

All schemes should have an electronic key safe, which can be opened remotely (or via a combination code) by the Call Monitoring Centre in the event of an emergency whilst maintaining the security of the residents. This safe is used to ensure that master keys, access keys and relevant data are stored securely. It enables access to all parts of the building for example when the Scheme Manager is absent.

The types of keys included within the policy are:

- (i) Master keys
- (ii) Access keys
- (iii) Residents accommodation keys.

Guidance is also included in this document for employees to enable them to access a resident's home in the event of an emergency or when assistance is required, and the resident is not able to open the door themselves.

1. Management Guidance for the Key Safe and Control of Keys

The Scheme Manager is responsible for the secure handling and storage of:

- a. Master Keys, which provide access to two or more residents' homes and other locked areas. The master key should only ever be used in the event of an emergency or if the resident has given their permission. One master key should be always stored in the Key Safe when not in use. The master key should not be taken off site without the prior agreement of a Scheme Manager's line manager. Scheme Managers who live on site should store the master key in the key safe and not in their home, when they are not on duty.
- b. Access Keys enable the Scheme Manager to perform their daily duties around the scheme, and provides access to various scheme facilities including lifts, electricity cupboards and access hatches Access to the main entrance, this may include key fobs.
- c. Resident accommodation keys
- d. Keys to the fire panel and relevant service user criteria information must be stored in the red fire box in line with the Fire Risk Management System Policy
- e. The key safe should house the master key, along with any spares and access keys. All of these keys should be clearly marked with numbers to not allow identification and an index of keys should be kept separate to the keys. This can be stored on the scheme shared drive (password protected).

2. Maintaining the Security of the Electronic Key Safe

Daily checks should be carried out and the Scheme Manager should confirm on the Aareon App that the master key(s) are accounted for and that they are stored in the key safe as required. Where

there is a Relief Manager, they have the responsibility for the daily and weekly checks. It is the responsibility of the Scheme Manager's line manager to ensure that the Relief Manager knows what is expected regarding checking the appropriate information and ensuring it is up to date (unless it is their buddy, and this learning has already happened).

3. Secure Handling and Control of Residents Accommodation Keys

At the tenancy start date all of the keys to the property will be given to the resident. If keys are subsequently lost, then replacement costs will be at the expense of the resident. Scheme Managers should not keep a key to resident's home. If the resident does not have anyone to hold a spare key for them then a key safe using a combination code can be fitted to enable them to store a spare key securely. This could then assist them in the event of an emergency or if they lock themselves out of their home and this could also assist carers who are not Housing 21 employees.

5.1 Accessing a Resident's Home

- a. Housing 21 respects the privacy and tenancy rights of all residents' and will always seek reasonable notice when access to their home is required.
- b. The master key can be used to enter a resident's accommodation on an exceptional or emergency basis. Use of the master key by either the Scheme Manager or other designated users (as per section 11) should be recorded in the scheme diary.
- c. Accessing a resident's accommodation with the master key without permission or a clear identified need, i.e., an emergency is a serious breach of policy and procedure.
- d. Entering a property without permission or a Court Order is technically trespassing. Where it is identified that there has been a breach the line manager should refer to Housing 21's code of conduct and take appropriate action.
- e. Every effort should be made to gain a resident's permission before anyone accesses their home. An assessment should be made to determine whether access is required. If there is an identified emergency, concern about the health or well-being of a resident or disrepair to a property or adjoining property (intentional or wear and tear) then the Scheme Manager may need to consider gaining access. Full guidance to assist Scheme Managers is available in Accessing a Residents Property in the Housing Toolkit.

5.2 Access for Gas Servicing

As well as pre-arranged care and support, planned visits to a resident's home by authorised contractors and Housing 21 employees will need to take place to fulfil Housing 21's programme of planned works and/or adhere to legal obligations, including Gas Safety testing. Please refer to the Gas Safety Policy and Procedure for further guidance.

5.3 For minor repairs requests, and other non-urgent property related issues

The master key must not be used unless permission to enter has been granted and the Permission to Access Form has been completed. A Designated Authorised User (please refer to section 11) may only use the master key.

5.4 Accessing a Property for Welfare Visits

If the resident has limited mobility arrangements can be agreed to enable use of the master key by the Scheme Manager for planned welfare visits. Arrangements must be agreed with the resident and documented on their support plan/or their tenancy file. This must be reviewed every six months. Alternatively, a key safe can be fitted to assist carers who are not Housing 21 employees and other visitors.

5.5 Accessing a Property without Receiving Permission

Access to a resident's home without permission should be on an exceptional basis unless an assessment has been made that demonstrates an emergency has arisen i.e., something that may immediately affect the health and well-being of residents and/or the fabric of the building. In these cases, the Scheme Manager, or another authorised Housing 21 employee i.e., relief manager or line manager may use the master key to gain access.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- When the emergency pull cord or pendant is activated
- When a serious concern about a resident's welfare has been raised
- When a property is empty but unexplained noise or other concerns has been raised
- When unexplained smells, gas smells, and/or floods occur from the property.

Full guidance to assist Scheme Managers is available in Accessing a Residents Property guidance in the Housing Toolkit.

6. Main Entrance – Keys, Key Fobs and Additional Keys/ Fobs

Where the main entrance doors are unlocked by means of a key/fob, Housing 21 will issue one key/fob to each household member. The Scheme Manager may provide additional key/fobs on request from the resident. The provision of an additional key/fob must be recorded on the residents file and on the key inventory identifying who will hold the key and therefore have access to the building or the residents' flat.

The cost of additional keys/fobs will usually be met by the resident. However, exceptions to charging for lost fobs may be made by the Scheme Manager and discretion may be used based on the individual circumstances of the resident.

7. Cutting Keys and Obtaining Additional Keys

A master suited lock can be operated by the correct key PLUS the master key. Additional keys for suited locks must be acquired through the Scheme Manager with the cost covered by the resident. All additional keys must be recorded together with the names of all keyholders. Lost keys and key fobs should be reported to the Scheme Manager immediately.

Suited locks and key fobs require the Scheme Manager to order replacements for the resident, at the resident's cost. However, discretion to not charge may be used by the Scheme Manager based on the individual circumstances of the resident.

8. Changing Locks

The Scheme Manager should try and discourage residents from changing the lock to their home. Secondary or different locks can cause problems for the resident and managers where access is needed in the event of an emergency. The Scheme Manager should also explain to the resident that if access to the accommodation is required in an emergency, which results in damage to the door, the resident may be recharged for the cost of any remedial work. However, discretion to not recharge may be applied by the Scheme Manager based on the individual circumstances of the resident.

The resident should complete the request to include additional security or change locks form. Permission should only be granted on the basis that the resident will retain the suited lock, and replace it at the end of the tenancy, at their own cost. If this is not done, Housing 21 will replace and repair where necessary, and recharge the resident (or former resident). However, discretion to not recharge may be applied by the Scheme Manager based on the individual circumstances of the resident. This arrangement should be reviewed every 12 months.

9. Secure Handling, Storage and Control of Access Keys

Key safes using a combination code can be fitted to areas not on the master suite to assist in an emergency out of hours. This would then prevent the contractor from having access to the master key in the event of an emergency.

Where key safes have been fitted the Scheme Manager must ensure that the Call Monitoring Provider and their buddy Scheme Manager have full up to date knowledge of where and how to access the Access Keys. This is an ongoing responsibility, and any change of codes must be passed onto all delegated users within 24 hours.

10. Lost or Missing Master Key

If a master key has been misplaced or damaged, the Scheme Manager must inform their line manager immediately to agree the most appropriate action. Full details must be recorded on ERICA.

11. Who can have access to the Master Key?

Only authorised 'Designated Users' may have access to master keys. Designated Users can be authorised by the Scheme Manager's line manager, but will always be the following:

- Scheme Manager/Housing Manager
- Relief/buddy Scheme Manager
- Emergency Services
- Operations Manager/Extra Care Managers
- Regional Operations Manager/Regional Extra Care Managers
- Contractors in the event of an emergency

- Third party care providers and maintenance contractors (Kent PFI)

Where there is an assessed emergency when the Scheme Manager is absent, the call monitoring provider has the authority to delegate Temporary Designated User status to a Duty Manager (or equivalent). This status remains in place until the specific issue has been resolved.

12. How Emergency Services, Central Control Provider or other Designated Users access the Master Key in an Emergency

The Scheme Manager will ensure that the Call Monitoring Provider and all appropriate Designated Users have full up to date knowledge of where and how to access the master key. This is an ongoing responsibility and access will only be given to the master key in line with agreed protocols with the Call Monitoring Centre. Any change of location, code, or other details of the key safe that may affect access to the master key must be passed onto all Designated Users within 24 hours.

13. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Housing 21 aspires to embed diversity and inclusion within all our organisational activities to enable these principles to become part of our everyday processes. To ensure inclusive outcomes, consideration of individual requirements may necessitate reasonable adjustments to how this policy is applied and this should be considered on a case-by-case basis. This includes, but is not limited to, consideration of adaptations to meet the needs of residents with disabilities.