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| Doc Number: 3-15                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Lead: Manager, Housing Services | Last Full Review: May 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Tick one of the below for review/changes made:<br><b>Full review and changes made</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/><br>(add changes summary to table below)<br><br><b>Full review, no changes made</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><br><b>Changes made but no full review</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br>(add changes summary to table below) |                                 | <b>Reviewer / Editor:</b> Manager, Housing Services<br><br><b>Changes Approved By:</b> Manager, Housing Services<br><br><hr/> <b>Reviewed and edited in-line with the Beacon?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

## Keyholding Policy

### Document Change Details

| Date     | Summary of Changes Made                                                                                                                         |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oct 2023 | All Housing P&Ps revert to version 01 as approval process & version control moved to SharePoint. Version number no longer shown on the document |
| May 2025 | Reviewed in line with the Beacon. Role changes reflected. Responsibilities added. Added water test 3.0                                          |
|          |                                                                                                                                                 |

## **1.0 Introduction**

This policy provides clear guidelines on keyholding for our housing and property services team.

Significant elements of this policy may not apply to Learning Disability services where the “Duty of Care” responsibilities are higher.

## **2.0 Keyholding during working hours**

### **Housing services**

We will not usually hold an office copy of keys for individual flats apart from in very exceptional circumstances or for housing with specific tenant needs. E.g., short-term supported housing issued on a licence and where the licensee doesn't have exclusive rights to access the property.

Currently this applies to our Brighton Discharge to Assess service in Brighton where keys are held in a separate key safe at the property and where support staff are expected to let themselves into tenant's homes for the purposes of providing intensive mental health support. It also applies to our Southdown Steps service.

A key safe containing a key to the building and shared areas will be installed at properties with communal areas. Members of the housing & property services teams may carry keys for property communal areas only if they need to gain access to these areas to complete water and fire alarm tests, access boilers and for inspection/walk throughs of common areas etc.

Tenants are advised to leave a spare flat door key with a trusted friend or relative.

With the agreement of the tenant, the keyholder names and addresses should be recorded on QL.

We will ensure locks are changed at new lettings and transfers.

### **Learning Disability service**

When accepting a tenancy, tenants, or their appointees, will discuss with the support team what they'd like to if they don't respond to their door being knocked. LD tenants may have epilepsy or mobility issues which make them vulnerable to falls, or other reasons why they're unable to answer their door. Arrangements around access to their flats must be identified on their risk assessment as necessary.

“Duty of Care” to tenants may sometimes mean support staff will need to gain entry.

Master key systems, spare keys and key safes are used in supported living schemes.

Good records must be kept of spare keys held on behalf of a tenant.

Given the vulnerability of other tenants living in the building, tenants should be discouraged from giving spare keys to people other than trusted family members.

### **Master keys (All services)**

If a property has a master key system, we must not use the master key to gain access to a flat without permission from the tenant, except in emergency situations. (Permission must be noted on a tenants file or risk assessment in LD).

Where there is an emergency and it becomes necessary to gain entry via a master key, two people should be present to act as witnesses for each other. This could be two team members or a team member and a contractor.

### **Gaining access to carry out repairs**

#### **Housing services only**

Contractors must give as much notice as possible when they require access to a flat, ideally 48 hours minimum. This is so tenants can arrange for their trusted keyholder to be there, if they're unavailable.

We are not able to wait at properties to allow access for responsive repairs without the tenant or a person nominated by the tenant being present as well.

In exceptional circumstances, and only with the tenant's consent, we may arrange access to a property via a locksmith to complete essential compliance checks before they go overdue. This is only if the tenant is away and unable or unwilling to return for the check. If this becomes necessary, a member of the team will attend to oversee the contractors whilst they are inside the property.

#### **LD only**

Contractors will usually gain access when the tenant is at home and a support worker is in the building. Consideration must be given to the vulnerability of both the tenant and contractor before staff leave them alone. Additional staffing may be required to support contractor visits.

Where disruption to scheduled work is considered harmful to the tenant, support staff may give access to the contractor with the tenant's permission.

### **KEYSAFES**

There are several key safes outside unstaffed properties to help us and contractors to attend to repairs in the communal areas of buildings and voids within them.

Details of key safe access must be detailed in our out of hours spreadsheet.

Key safes are not for the use of tenants, their visitors or other service providers. The key code shouldn't be shared with tenants, external staff or contractors.

Where a key safe code has been shared with a tenant, property services will arrange for the key code to be reset, and the out-of-hours spreadsheet updated.

Where we are aware tenants have been using the key safe to gain access, we must notify them in advance that the code is to be changed and advise them to carry their own key in future.

## **3.0 OUT OF HOURS AND KEYHOLDING**

### **General – Housing Services Only**

We do not have access to master keys or tenants' keys that we hold outside of office hours.

If access is required in an emergency outside of office hours, emergency services (Police, Fire, Ambulance) are responsible for gaining entry. Our out-of-hours call centre can provide the key code for entry into the communal areas as necessary.

Sussex Police, Secombs and East Sussex Fire & Rescue have been sent a log of all the key safe codes for our blocks. We should update these parties if/when key safe codes need to be changed. Currently the email addresses to alert are:

Sussex Police - [101@sussex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:101@sussex.pnn.police.uk)

The Ambulance Service - [enquiries@secamb.nhs.uk](mailto:enquiries@secamb.nhs.uk)

East Sussex Fire & Rescue (Central Command) - [enquiries@esfrs.org](mailto:enquiries@esfrs.org)

### **Tenants who are locked out**

Tenants must be made aware at sign up of the process if they lock themselves out.

If a tenant locks themselves out of hours, they should collect their spare key from their keyholder or stay with a friend or relative until our office re-opens. If they are unable to find their own solution, they should contact the out of hours on call service for support.

Our out of hours service holds details of local locksmiths and can arrange for one to attend a property so that the tenant can gain access/have the locks changed. The tenant will be advised that they will be recharged for the cost and that it is likely to be higher than normal due to being out of hours.

We will be invoiced for the cost of the locksmith call out and work. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, it's the tenant's responsibility to pay for damage to doors and replacement locks.

In some circumstances it may be possible for the tenant to agree on a repayment plan for the recharge.