# Making Unannounced Calls or “Spot Checks” Care Policy

## Policy Statement

A “spot check” is an unannounced visit made by a supervisor/line manager to a service user’s home to ensure that care staff are delivering the service agreed in a contract/care plan to the standards required by and of the care provider.

Zenith Care uses “spot checks” to monitor and improve the quality and safety of the services provided.

However, it also recognises that the making of “spot checks” is only one tool to use in assuring the quality of its provision and must be carefully managed. It tries to communicate to its staff that its practices are not based on lack of trust or designed to arouse suspicion of their being “spied on” but have a positive value as a supervision and training tool.

### Purposes of “spot checks”

Zenith Care makes clear to its staff that “spot checks” serve to:

* assure staff that they are carrying out their duties in line with the agreements made with service users and commissioners
* provide feedback to staff based on observations of their practice that they are meeting the provider’s expectations of them
* correct any misunderstandings and mistakes that might be made
* discuss directly with service users their care arrangements and identify any concerns they might have
* address any unsafe or poor practices that might be identified.

### Key questions

Most spot checks will seek answers to the following.

Are care staff:

* being reliable and punctual in their attendance?
* treating their service users (and others involved) with respect and sensitivity and meeting their needs to maintain their dignity and privacy?
* relating well to their service users and their informal carers?
* adopting safe practices in all aspects of the care and support offered?
* carrying out the tasks specified in the care plan correctly and appropriately?
* keeping their recording accurate and up to date?

Are service users (and others involved):

* satisfied with the care arrangements and the service provision in terms of its consistency, reliability and meeting expectations?
* happy with their care workers in terms of their punctuality, presentation, style and communications with them, etc?
* concern about any aspect of their care arrangements or have any complaints?
* wanting any changes or improvements?

### Arrangements

Zenith Care plans its spot checks as follows.

1. For long-term or open-ended service agreements, spot checks will be made on a random basis by a nominated supervisor or manager with a view to having a check made on each home six monthly/annually (depending on practicalities and resources).
2. For time-limited service agreements particularly those involving intermediate care or reablement programmes, there will be at least one such check.
3. Where Zenith Care receives information or has concerns about a situation it could increase its spot checking so that the issues can be better identified, assessed and addressed.

Zenith Care recognises that there will be situations where spot checking is unnecessary, for example, where there needs to be intensive or frequent supervisory/management involvement, or even undesirable, for example, in the provision of sensitive, end-of-life care where the making of a spot check could be disruptive and cause unnecessary distress. In such situations, the supervisory/management arrangements will be made with service users or their representatives and the care staff involved.

Zenith Care will determine the scope of its spot checking activities and the time allocated to them so that they are proportionate and effective. It will not make spot checks unless it expects its care staff to be present in line with their allocated duties and visiting schedules.

Spot checks can be complemented with planned or arranged visiting to service users and their representatives. These do not count as spot checks. Zenith Care does not carry out spot checks on its service users, which could be seen as invasive or intrusive.

Zenith Care will always make service users and their representatives aware of the possibility of a spot check during a care staff visit and will obtain their agreement that such an eventuality will form part of the service provision. It will make clear that the person making the spot check will be observing as appropriate care workers’ practice and might need to be present but would always respect their wishes over such matters and would do nothing to impair any sense of dignity and need for privacy.

Zenith Care will make clear the practice and arrangements for spot checking to its care workers and include them in their terms of employment.

### Procedures

When a supervisor/manager makes a spot check they will:

* identify who they are and why they are calling — sometimes that might have a different reason for calling
* indicate what they would like to do, in what order and how long they are likely to stay
* observe and interact with their care staff, offering feedback, guidance and discussion as appropriate to the situation
* hold discussions with the service user and/or informal carers/representatives if present as appropriate
* agree on any actions that might need to be taken immediately
* complete a brief report following the visit (a sample report form is available in [Resources](https://app.croneri.co.uk/topics/quality-assurance/resources#DCAM-1332400)).

## Training

Care workers are introduced in their induction training to the service’s policy on “spot checks” as part of its approach to assuring and improving the quality of its service.

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| Signed: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_Kechi Anyanwu\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
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