

Local Help My Way

Staffordshire Micro Provider Network

Care Quality Standards

Purpose and Scope

Welcome to the 'Local Help – My Way Project'. This guide details the quality standards (rules) required for all Community Micro-Providers wishing to join our network and be listed in the Staffordshire Micro-Provider Directory.

These standards help ensure that people receive safe, kind, and reliable care in their own homes, while also supporting independent micro-providers and care professionals in having a positive experience with our service. They specify the minimum expectations our organisation has for micro providers, and what individuals can expect from them.

Although they cannot address every possible situation, these standards offer a clear foundation for professional conduct and service quality.

Micro providers should be caring, kind, compassionate, reliable, proactive, and honest. You will remain bound by these quality standards to remain part of the network. These standards may be updated periodically. It is your responsibility to check for updates regularly.

By joining, you agree to uphold these standards and contribute to the safety, dignity, and well-being of those you support.

While Staffordshire County Council and Support Staffordshire are not regulated by the Care Quality Commission and do not regulate or endorse individual providers, we are here to support your journey.

To join this network, you must:

- Work on your own or with a small team- fewer than eight staff in number, not full-time equivalents.
- Help people in the county of Staffordshire.
- Help people in your local area.

Note: Failure to adhere to these standards may result in immediate loss of access to our service.

Person-Centered Care

As a Community Micro-Provider, your role is to help people live well at home. You should bring not only professional care but also personal warmth to their everyday lives, helping them maintain independence, dignity, and well-being. Always take the time to understand the person you support, including their routine, likes, and needs. Put the person first in every decision. This includes considering their preferred method of communication and how they access information and language in their preferred formats. You should make a care plan with them and/or their family that reflects their needs, choices, and goals. You should consistently deliver services that treat everyone fairly and equally. You should treat everyone with respect, compassion, and professionalism, valuing everyone for who they are.

Keeping People Safe - Safeguarding

Your services must be safe and dependable. This means you must always adhere to the six essential safeguarding principles to protect vulnerable individuals. These include helping people make their own decisions, preventing harm before it happens, knowing how and when to report problems —especially those related to medication —offering protection to those most at risk, working in partnership with communities, and maintaining transparency and accountability. Due to the nature of the work of micro providers with vulnerable individuals, you must complete **Safeguarding Level 2 training**. You must also follow Staffordshire's Safeguarding Adults policy.

See also [Protecting adults from abuse - Staffordshire County Council Social Care Institute for Excellence \(SCIE\)](#)

Working within the limits of your skills and qualifications

As a Community Micro-Provider, you need to ensure that the individuals you support are safe and in capable hands. To achieve the best outcomes for everyone involved, it is essential only to do work that you are trained for and understand. Being honest about your strengths and limitations helps ensure both your safety and the well-being of those you support. It is your responsibility to ensure you are comfortable with the work specified by your customer. If anything is unclear, you should seek clarification from the individual, their family, or their authorised representative (POA). This includes only using mobility aids if you are trained and insured to do so. Additionally, you should aim to improve your skills through continuous professional development (CPD) via Support

Staffordshire and its partners. This commitment to learning and improvement is key to providing the best care possible.

Helping with Medicines

Only help someone with their medication, if you are trained and have written permission via a MARS chart (Medical Administration Record Sheet). Never suggest or give medication without being asked by the individual or their legal representative (such as someone with Power of Attorney. For example, an individual might ask, "Can you open this bottle?" or "Can you pass me my medication?"— you should never suggest or give medication without prompting. Always maintain accurate records, follow the NHS and local guidelines, and check with your insurer to ensure you are covered. Some medicines, like injections, eye drops, or skin creams for broken skin, require specialised training. You must not administer these unless a healthcare professional has trained you and approves that you can do so safely.

See also: [Managing medicines for adults receiving social care in the community NICE guideline \[NG67\]](#)

Being Professional

As a Community Micro-Provider, professional conduct is essential. Always be honest, reliable and respectful.

This includes:

- You must not put any individual at risk of harm by way of abuse or neglect.
- You must keep individuals' personal information safe (**GDPR and UK data protection laws**) by keeping personal information such as names, addresses, medical details, and photographs confidential.
- You must work within professional boundaries. This means **you do not:** use illegal substances or drink alcohol before/at work, bring dependents to work, overuse your mobile phones and social media, or smoke or vape in individuals' homes. (See GDPR policy)
- Don't borrow money or accept gifts outside of agreed pay
- Never conduct other business from the Care Recipient's home.
- Dress appropriately and maintain good hygiene
- Personal visitors should only attend with prior agreement from the person you support and their family or their advocate.

- You must work cooperatively with the Care Recipient, their family, their advocate, and other professionals, and raise any concerns promptly and openly.
- Do not try to take individuals away from another provider.
- Understanding and complying with consumer protection and competition laws is essential to your role.

Running Your Business Well

As a Community Micro-Provider, people rely on you to deliver consistent, high-quality support. You should be flexible and responsive to changing needs, keep your promises, and provide ample notice if you are unable to attend.

Operate your service responsibly by staying within legal and regulatory boundaries—this includes **not directing an individual's care**. Every individual should receive a written contract covering terms, notice periods, and holidays. Avoid discriminatory pricing or price-fixing and only withdraw services under specific conditions (e.g. non-payment or unsafe environments).

It is your responsibility to arrange travel to and from placements following the agreed-upon policies. Always present yourself professionally, act with integrity, and ensure your business practices reflect the trust placed in you.

Proving Your Employment Status

Proof of your self-employment status should be provided by submitting your UTR (Unique Tax Reference). In the context of self-employment, status means demonstrating that you operate as an independent worker rather than as an employee of an organisation. This is important for legal, tax, and insurance purposes.

The HMRC CEST tool can help you with this.

([Check employment status for tax - GOV.UK](#))

Regulation and CQC

As a micro-provider, your role is to support someone with their daily life — not to decide what kind of care they should have, how much help they need, or how that care should be given. Making those decisions is called “directing care,” and it is a responsibility typically reserved for health or social care professionals.

If a micro-provider directs care, they may be breaking the law because it is classed as a “regulated activity” by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). You can still help someone follow their care plan or support them in making choices — but you must not

make decisions on their behalf about their care. This helps ensure the person receives the right help in the right way.

Micro providers who intend to deliver personal care as defined by the CQC must ensure that they are either registered with the CQC or meet the criteria for exemption.

More information on regulations can be found here:

[General exceptions and exemptions from registration - Care Quality Commission](#)

Communicating Clearly & Written Paperwork

Clear and respectful communication is essential for Community Micro-Providers.

You are expected to be polite and professional with the person you support, their family or advocate, other professionals, and the local *My Help – My Way* team, ensuring you respect their communication needs.

The care plan/contract should clearly outline

- the person's needs,
- preferences,
- agreed tasks,
- any risks or boundaries.

If the care plan no longer meets the person's needs, discuss it with them or their family to update it. Where requested, you should keep accurate, objective, and up-to-date records of the care you provide.

Pricing

Charge fairly and provide clear invoices on time. Prices should align with Direct Payment rates (£16.59/hour). If you charge £22.50/hour or more for specialist services, please notify the Staffordshire Micro-Providers Network at hello@LocalHelpMyWay.co.uk.

Also see Pricing policy.

Travel and Mileage

You cannot charge for travel to and from work. But if you take someone out to the shop or an appointment, you can charge for mileage. This must be in your contract with them. You can reclaim business mileage from HMRC in the form of a deduction on your annual tax return at the rate of 45p/mile. Some micro providers specify a distance limit in their contract for travel beyond which an additional charge will be applied. You must keep a record of all your work mileage.

Time off, Retainers and Notice Periods

Your contract should clearly outline what happens in cases of absence, holidays, or the unfortunate event of an individual's passing.

- Planning time off in advance is essential and should be agreed with the person you support, their family, or the referring contact. Whether you provide regular or respite support, someone else may need to step in during your absence; so give at least two weeks' notice to allow time for suitable cover to be sourced by the recipient.
- If an individual passes away, your contract will end immediately, and no notice period should be charged.
- If either party wants to leave the contract, a typical notice period is 7 to 14 days unless quality standards have been breached.

Transparency in these areas helps build trust and ensures continuity of care.

Contingency Planning

Always have an emergency plan in place as part of the support plan. Ensure individuals know who to contact if you're unavailable. However, remember that you can inform people about other providers, but you must not arrange care on their behalf; the individual must contact and direct their support themselves.

Keep a Portfolio of Important Documents

Keeping a portfolio of key documents helps demonstrate that your service is safe, professional, and trustworthy. It shows that you meet legal requirements, follow good business practices, and are committed to delivering high-quality care. A well-organised portfolio builds confidence with clients and their families, supports quality assurance, and ensures you're ready to respond to any issues or requests. It also saves time when applying for support, joining networks, or working with other professionals. Keeping everything in one place shows you're prepared and serious about your work. Templates for some of the documents are available in the micro provider resource hub.

Your portfolio should include:

- Contract/terms of service.
- DBS check (within last 3 years)
- Proof of self-employment
- Insurance documents

- Signed copy of this quality document
- Training certificates
- Templates for plans and risk assessments
- Policies (GDPR, safeguarding, complaints)
- References/testimonials

Withdrawing Services

You have the right to withdraw your services without notice in the following situations:

- You are not paid on time.
- You are asked to work in an unsafe place.
- You are not treated with dignity and respect.
- If you are asked to coordinate, roster, or deliver care and support, this would be regarded as a regulated activity, and you are not a regulated provider.
- You are asked to deliver support for which you are not trained or competent.

Feedback and Complaints

You should have a clear and straightforward process for handling compliments and complaints, outlined in a policy, so that individuals understand how to give you feedback. Being open to feedback helps you grow and improve.

If you have any concerns, report them immediately. Depending on the situation, you should raise concerns with the person you support, their family, their advocate, or relevant health and social care professionals such as a social worker or GP. You may also contact the Local Authority Safeguarding Team.

Your primary working relationship is with the individual, but if you or they wish to escalate a concern further, you are welcome to contact the *My Help My Way* team. Be open and honest, especially if a mistake has occurred.

In Return for Your Commitment

By joining the network and meeting these standards, you'll receive:

- Advice, guidance and resources to help make your business safe, legal, and sustainable
- Information about where to get training.
- Opportunities to collaborate with other Micro Providers in your area.
- Feedback to demonstrate your impact and the quality that Staffordshire micro providers offer.

- Updates about our processes to ensure fair, honest and transparent quality assurance, which in turn protects your reputation and the safety of caregivers and individuals.
- A chance to review this document annually to promote a shared vision and clear expectations of quality for the micro-providers' network in the county.

Breaches of Standards

- Any micro provider found violating these standards will have their local help my way membership revoked immediately, and their profile removed from the network's website.
- If a Micro Provider is found operating an unregulated care service that should be regulated, they will be removed from the Staffordshire Micro Providers Network immediately and reported to CQC.
- Any reports of illegal conduct will be reported to the relevant authority, and all membership benefits will be cancelled immediately.