

Confidentiality Policy

Everybody can be affected by confidentiality issues and it is important that volunteers realise that it is not only clients and client information that this applies to, but also to volunteer issues and individuals as the day-to-day work of groups and organisations as a whole.

Why is Confidentiality Important?

Often volunteers have direct access to guests and their information. They build up relationships with guests based on trust. It is this aspect that gives rise for the need for clear policies on confidentiality. Volunteers may not be able to keep a secret, or respect a confidence if the person is subsequently at risk.

Groups or organisations also need to consider why they are holding information on a client or a volunteer. Do they really need the information? Who has access to this information?

1. Volunteers need to be able to:

- Build up relationships with guests
- Understand the need for confidentiality
- Understand the reason for the confidentiality policy
- Understand the guest must not be put at risk
- Deal calmly and confidentially with information given
- Know who to report to

2. Volunteers need support:

- They need to be able to deal with a situation, and realise that it is not their place to provide solutions
- Some information may shock the volunteer

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

a. Policy Statement

As people offering support to individuals who use this shelter we may have access to personal information. This is a relationship of trust, which needs to be respected. Information gained about people must be treated as being confidential.

b. Confidentiality Definition

Confidentiality is maintaining the security of information obtained from or about an individual, which has been gained through a professional working relationship. This information can only be shared in restricted circumstances such as when there is a legal compulsion or it is required to ensure the wellbeing of the person. Some information will need to be shared with people/agencies who directly contribute to the provision of

services and who are bound by the principles of confidentiality. Personal information should be defined as information any person would consider to be private.

c. Principles

Information can be shared in restricted circumstances:

Even in restricted circumstances, information can only be shared on a need to know basis. This should be with people who are directly concerned and who are also bound by the rules of confidentiality.

Information can be shared when it indicates that the person or other individuals are at risk of serious harm:

It is necessary to disclose information concerning abuse. This would include instances when the person was engaging in or contemplating serious self-harm.

Information can be shared when a court has issued an order compelling disclosure:

Courts of Law have the power to compel provision of information.

Information can be shared when it is required to ensure that the person receives the necessary care and support - not to share this knowledge would affect this service. This includes:

- Volunteers who need information to enable them to perform their support duties for guests.
- Care plans and strategies which support the person need to be shared with others who are working directly with that person.
- Agencies such as social services, health authorities, care quality commission, welfare benefits agencies and housing providers share statutory roles and require information to ensure that financial and support services are maintained.

Information can be shared when the person concerned has given consent:

Efforts must be made to ensure that the person in consent is based on an informed and free choice. It is recognized that some people may not be able to give or express their opinion about consent or non-consent. In this case, a decision to share information should be based on a best interest principle and a reasonable assumption that if the person had the capacity, they would consent.

These are the only circumstances in which information about a person can be shared.