

Confidentiality Policy

All personal information relating to carers using our service is regarded as confidential and is stored securely in a locked filing cabinet or on our protected computer system.

General Principles:

- Hambleton & Richmondshire Carers Centre (HRCC) believes that information about individual clients should be shared on a 'need to know basis' only.
- HRCC works on the principle of team confidentiality. This means that information about clients is available to all team members. However, information will only be shared with colleagues where this is necessary in order to provide a good quality service.
- Any records we keep about individual clients will be the minimum necessary in order to provide them with a good quality service.
- HRCC recognises that information relating to the person being cared for is necessary in order to support the carer. This will be kept to a minimum and be recorded on the same principles as above ie where it is relevant and necessary to provide a good service.
- Where possible, we will gain consent to store a carer's personal information for internal use. Where the carer is under the age of 18, consent from the parent will be gained.
- HRCC will only share information outside the organisation where consent has been given by the carer or young carer's parent. Occasionally, brief details will need to be shared about the person being cared for without their explicit consent (e.g. for a Carers Assessment). However, every effort will be made to obtain consent of the person being cared for, or consent from a person with parental or carer responsibility for them on their behalf, where possible.
- When a referral to HRCC is made on a carer's behalf, usually from another agency, HRCC staff will check that consent has been given by the carer.
- Our principles of confidentiality will be explained to all carers in a way that suits their age and level of understanding, or will be given to them in a format that is accessible according to their needs.

Exceptions:

Hambleton & Richmondshire Carers Centre recognises that there are some exceptions to confidentiality. There are occasions when we may need to break confidentiality, which include:

- Where a child or adult is at risk of harm and confidentiality needs to be broken to safeguard them
- Where information given indicates that a crime has been committed.
- Where information given indicates a possible terrorist threat.

If a staff member feels it may be necessary to break confidentiality for any of the above reasons they should record their decision clearly, discuss with their line manager as soon as possible and follow all child protection and safeguarding procedures and policies. It is usually good practice to inform the adult or child concerned if information is to be shared in this way, unless to do so would put someone at risk.

Procedures and safeguarding policies should be followed for breaking confidentiality in these circumstances, recording such incidents and all action taken in response.

If another agency requests information about an individual the decision to give it without consent is also based on the above exceptions.

If we share information for any other purpose (eg referring on to another agency) we will make it clear the reasons for this and gain consent before doing so.

If a carer requests that a third party attends appointments or support sessions with them, the support worker must record in case notes that inclusion of the third party was at the carers request in order that no later misunderstandings about confidentiality occur.

Use of emails and faxes

- Where emails or faxes are used to pass on information regarding a client, the information should comply with the above principles.
- No identifying factors should be used in the subject line/frontsheet and detail should be minimal.

Work outside the office

- Information relating to individual clients should only be taken to a staff member's home where this is absolutely necessary and unavoidable and should be agreed by the line manager.
- Where it is necessary, for database maintenance purposes, to carry data about carers or their cared for outside the office, the data will be stored in encrypted format. It will not be usual practice for database maintenance to be carried out away from the office.
- Individual client work should *never* be carried out on home computers as confidentiality cannot be assured.
- All groups, courses and other external events will have an attendance register. Before and after the event this information will be kept securely in the office. If this information is to be shared with another agency, this will be made clear at the event and attendees will be given the choice to withhold their information.
- Where it is necessary, for safety and communication reasons in the event of trips or activities, to take names and addresses of carers out of the office, this will be kept to the minimum required and no information about a carer will be left in an unattended area e.g. in an unattended vehicle.

Use of carers information for publicity or training purposes

- Any information used for publicity by the Carers Centre will be made anonymous by removing any identifying factors unless full consent is given by the individual it relates to.

Disposal of confidential information

All information kept about carers will be kept for the length of time dictated by contractual agreements (currently 6 years with NYCC) or for the length of time dictated by law or good practice if not specified within a contract.

All confidential waste will be shredded before being disposed of.

All staff and volunteers will sign up to this confidentiality statement.

Any breaches of this policy will be dealt with promptly and may result in disciplinary action.

A serious breach of confidentiality may be treated as gross misconduct under the disciplinary procedure.

Staff should make carers aware of our confidentiality policy via the 'Commitment to a Quality Service' leaflet, once this leaflet has been developed, and in the meantime should make carers aware of the policy at the start of contact with the carer.

Staff Confidentiality

- Records of supervision sessions and other staff records will be kept in locked cabinets and restricted folders on the server. Access is restricted to line managers.