



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Background

Confidentiality is often taken for granted. It becomes an issue only when something goes wrong. This may happen both when information is given and when it is withheld. Problems also arise when information is inaccurate or out of date.

In the interests of quality assurance and in compliance with the requirements of our major funders, the following is our policy and procedure on confidentiality.

Statement of Purpose

Our Statement of Purpose commits us to managing and developing our own direct services with an emphasis on good practice.

Policy

Users of Age Concern Northampton & County's services have a right to assume that information divulged by them will be treated in confidence.

Principles

There is a long-established legal right of an individual to privacy. All information pertaining to an individual is private, in other words details relating to a person are always the property of that person no matter how obtained. Any use of what might reasonably be construed as private information, without the individual's consent is an abuse of privacy. The acquisition and distribution of information about a person must only therefore be made with their consent.

Responsibility on behalf of Age Concern Northampton & County for confidentiality over personal details is initially in the hands of the person who acquires those details and then others within the organisation to whom those details are given.

That person will assume that all personal details learned from the client are confidential.

Clients should be encouraged to tell only as much about their problem as is necessary for the understanding of that problem.

Third parties must be aware of this policy and that clients will have access to the records that pertain to them.

Procedure

Specific personal details should only be collected as required for the issues being dealt with or the service given.

If information is stored in any form, confidentiality of it must be maintained. Personal files must only be accessible to those who need to use them for justifiable purposes. Manual files will be in locked cabinets, computerised files will be protected.

Client information will be kept separately from personnel files.

Personal details that remain unamended for over one year should be deleted each April.

Notes should be made of what is said in order to check for accuracy and clarity of understanding. Particular attention should be paid to matters that the client believes to be particularly confidential. If it is necessary to contact a third party on behalf of a client, either to collect information or to divulge it, the client's permission must be obtained.

If confidentiality cannot be assured the individual should be made aware of this from the outset.

Data Protection

The Association will register under the Data Protection Act and will ensure that information relating to individuals is obtained fairly, kept up to date and stored securely and that the client whose data is stored has rights of access enabling them to check the accuracy of that information, as required by the Act.