

**Aim of Policy**

To detail yourSanctuary's approach to maintaining confidentiality and the circumstances in which we may break confidentiality.

**Policy Statement**

yourSanctuary aims to ensure that any personal or confidential information relating to personnel within the yourSanctuary organisation or about people we work with, is handled in a confidential and sensitive manner. It is our policy that clients and staff using our services have a right to privacy and integrity and that they should be free from harassment, being pre-judged or otherwise compromised as a result of information they disclose or which we legitimately acquire.

It is essential that all employees, volunteers and Trustees understand this commitment to confidentiality.

Confidentiality cannot be adhered to in matters relating to serious criminal offences, child protection risks, or matters that affect the safety of clients, their children, the staff, volunteers, or the refuge.

**Procedure**

In fulfilling the above yourSanctuary will work within the requirements of the following legislation:

- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Public Interests Disclosure Act 1998

All information about clients and their children with whom we work will be treated with strict confidentiality, and only accessed by staff/volunteers that need to have access to it. Breaches of confidentiality may have life threatening consequences and therefore could be the subject of disciplinary action.

Files will be kept in a locked filing cabinet with controlled access. Files kept on the organisation's electronic case management system are password protected.

In circumstances where we are unable to uphold confidentiality (see "exceptions to confidentiality" later) the decision to breach this confidentiality policy will be taken by management in accordance with this policy.

**Staff and volunteers**

From recruitment to employment all correspondence will be treated as confidential and held in a locked filing cabinet. All employee/volunteer records and personal information will only be accessed by named staff. Under no circumstances will information relating to staff members or volunteers be given out to any individual or organisation without permission of that person.

Confidential information discussed at yourSanctuary Board, management meetings,

---

“Have Your Say”, Case Review and other meetings is not to be divulged to other parties without prior agreement of that meeting.

Staff and volunteers should, as far as possible, keep their personal details private from the work environment, i.e. do not divulge their address, telephone number etc.

Staff and volunteers should not divulge their surnames in the interests of safety.

Staff may have access to any information in their own records (apart from confidential references) but not those of anyone else's.

Any visitor should be made aware of the confidentiality policy and be asked not to repeat any information at all that is heard or seen whilst in the refuge or in any other environment within yourSanctuary.

### **Clients of yourSanctuary**

Staff and volunteers should not divulge personal information relating to all clients, other staff or volunteers to anyone outside yourSanctuary (this includes family, friends, etc). Clients are informed of the organisation's confidentiality policy during initial meetings.

### **Disclosure of information**

Information regarding clients may only be disclosed to other agencies with prior consent. Clients will be asked to sign a consent form when first engaging with one of our services.

### **Confidentiality of Refuge address**

The address of the yourSanctuary refuge is strictly confidential and it should not be given out except at a worker's discretion for purposes such as the need for one of the emergency services.

### **Access to Personal Records**

The personal records of a client are available to them on request. Otherwise all records are confidential and will only be available to relevant staff as necessary. These records will be kept in a locked place.

If a client wishes to have information or details regarding a particular issue or items of correspondence, a staff member may give the relevant excerpts to them.

Refuge residents use their files to store any documents they wish to keep safe and secure. Otherwise, only information, which is necessary for the running of the house and the provision of yourSanctuary services to the resident, will be kept locked.

### **Addresses**

The current or forwarding address etc of any client or ex-client should not be given out to anyone. Staff will not confirm a client is engaging with one of our services without prior consent.

Where consent is unknown or no consent has been given a summary of any

---

attempted contact with the client may be passed to the client via the appropriate support or outreach worker.

After a woman leaves refuge her post will be re-directed for up to three months, after this all correspondence will be returned to sender.

### **Use of Payphones in the Refuges**

There should be no incoming calls to the payphone within the refuges except by staff and management.

### **Telephone enquiries**

If agencies or individuals telephone asking to speak to a particular client, the helpline operator or person answering the call should first find out who the caller is and arrange to call them back. Take the caller's number and if they state they are from an agency check with that particular agency they are bona fide. For example if the caller is a Surrey police officer telephone Surrey Police central switchboard number when calling back. Always check with the resident concerned before confirming she is living in the house (see "Addresses").

### **Exceptions to confidentiality**

Once a person has become involved with your Sanctuary certain basic information is held on their file. This information is for staff use only except where:

- There is a child protection issue.
- There is a legal requirement to divulge that information.
- The client gives permission to a worker to use personal information.
- A client, their child(ren), or the refuge's safety is at risk e.g.:
  - If a client was considered to be harming another individual,
  - If it is suspected that a serious crime has been committed,
  - If it is considered that a client is seriously endangering their own life,
  - If a client is considered to be severely physically or mentally ill and is not seeking suitable support.

### **Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored through:

- Staff supervision
- Necessary breaches of confidentiality
- Complaints