



Rickmansworth Children's Centre Confidentiality Policy (November 2010)

Definition of Confidentiality (from Collins English Dictionary)

Spoken or given in confidence
Entrusted with another's secret affairs
Suggestive of intimacy

Aims of this policy

To provide guidance on what confidentiality means, provide the means to ensure its enforcement and who to go to in the event of a breach.

Details regarding other people should only be shared on a need to know basis. Any details of a personal nature will only be disclosed with the consent of the person involved. Rickmansworth Children's Centre understands that information is gathered by staff members during the course of their work. In some circumstances, this information will not be stated as confidential and staff members may have to exercise common sense and discretion in identifying whether information is expected to be confidential. If in doubt, always seek advice from your line manager.

Points to note

- ✓ Staff members/volunteers feel able to share information with their line manager in order to discuss issues and seek advice
- ✓ Staff members/volunteers should not exchange personal information or comments (gossip) about individuals with whom they have a professional relationship
- ✓ It is not appropriate to discuss a person's sexuality (i.e. outing a gay person) without their prior consent
- ✓ Staff members should not talk about the Children's Centre or individuals in a social setting
- ✓ Staff members/volunteers will not disclose to anyone, other than their line manager or designated person any information considered sensitive, personal, financial or private without the knowledge or consent of the individual concerned
- ✓ No information will be disclosed to any third party without the explicit written consent of the individual concerned. The line manager/designated person must be informed of the course of action an employee wishes to take before any information is disclosed.
- ✓ Any information collected must be for legitimate reasons. Information not to be used in such a way that there would be an unjustified adverse effect on the individual. Always be transparent about how the information will be used. Handle all personal data on in ways they would reasonably expect and make sure nothing unlawful is done with the data

- ✓ Where there is a legal duty for Rickmansworth Children's Centre to disclose information, the person to whom the confidentiality is owned will be informed that the disclosure has or will be made.

Information is held to enable Rickmansworth Children's Centre to monitor groups and services, to report to Herts County Council and to be an aid to future funding for the Centre.

Information regarding disability and ethnicity is kept for the purposes of monitoring our equal opportunities policy.

Access to information

- ✓ Where information is sensitive, i.e. family in crisis, it will be confidential to the employee dealing with the case and their line manager. Such information should be clearly labelled 'Confidential', kept in a locked cabinet/cupboard and only be accessed by the relevant persons.
- ✓ Information is confidential to Rickmansworth Children's Centre.
- ✓ Personal information regarding Children's Centre users, outreach clients or any other person giving details will remain within the Children's Centre
- ✓ Clients of outreach workers may have access to any information kept on them by making a request in writing to the Manager, giving 14 days notice and be signed by the individual. Sensitive information will only be made available to the person named on the file
- ✓ Employees may have sight of their personnel records, by giving 7 days notice in writing
- ✓ When working on confidential documents, staff must ensure that any information is not able to be seen or read by people in passing. This includes records or contact lists being left open on desks, information on computer screens not being visible and in the case of photocopying, ensuring sensitive documents are placed face down when finished with.

Storing information

- ✓ General non-confidential information will be kept in unlocked cabinets with open access to all staff
- ✓ Information regarding staff members, volunteers and providers will be kept in locked cabinets with restricted access.
- ✓ Employees personnel information is kept in locked filing cupboards by Shepherd Primary School.
- ✓ In an emergency, the Manager may authorise access to files.

Duty to disclose information

- ✓ Rickmansworth Children's Centre complies fully with the CRB code of practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information
- ✓ Any disclosures made will be kept separately from personnel records in secure storage. It is a criminal offence to pass this information on to anyone who is not entitled to receive it
- ✓ Disclosures to the media are not permitted unless consent from the individual has been obtained
- ✓ Child abuse will be reported to the Designated Senior Person, in the first instance, if the Designated Senior Person is not available, then the Deputy Designated Senior Person or Shepherd Primary Designated Senior Person

- ✓ Drug trafficking, money laundering, acts of terrorism or treason will be disclosed to the police
- ✓ Members of staff who believe an illegal act has taken place, or that a user is at risk of harming themselves or others, must report this to the Manager who will report it to the relevant authorities as appropriate

Data Protection Act

Information regarding individuals, whether kept on computer or paper, falls within the scope of the Data Protection act and must comply with the data protection principles. These are that personal data must be:

- Obtained and processed fairly and lawfully
- Held only for specified purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept longer than necessary
- Processed in accordance with the act
- Kept secure and protected
- Not transferred out of Europe

Breach of confidentiality

- ✓ Employees who are dissatisfied with the conduct or actions of other colleagues, should raise this with their line manager in the first instance, using the grievance procedure if necessary, and not discuss their dissatisfaction outside of Rickmansworth Children's Centre
- ✓ Staff members accessing unauthorised files or breaching confidentiality may face disciplinary action and possible dismissal. Ex employees breaching confidentiality may face legal action
- ✓ Final responsibility for breach of confidentiality rests with Rickmansworth Children's Centre

Whistle-blowing

- ✓ Should any member of staff or volunteer have concerns regarding bad practice which may impact on the service delivery of the Children's Centre they may refer directly to the lead of the Advisory Board, outside of the usual grievance procedure. (see Whistle-blowing Policy)