



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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BEACON Confidentiality Policy

1. Purpose

BEACON is committed to maintaining the highest standards of confidentiality in all its work in order to ensure the safety and well-being of service users, staff and volunteers. The purpose of this policy is to provide information which staff and volunteers will require to carry out their duties and states the specific tasks involved in maintaining confidentiality, as well as identifying who is responsible for carrying these tasks out. Breaches of confidentiality will be the subject of disciplinary action.

In fulfilling this aim, BEACON will work within the requirements of the following legislation:

- The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

2. Information which will be kept confidential

Personal data will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone who does not have the right to know. This includes information relating to an identified or identifiable individual, with particular awareness of sensitive personal data, and includes electronically held information.

Under no circumstances should personal information about BEACON's staff, trustees, volunteers or service users or its finances be discussed in a non-professional situation outside of the working environment. This includes general conversation with work colleagues, friends and family.

2.1 Information about service users

Information about service users can be shared between staff, volunteers and trustees on a need-to-know basis. Personal details disclosed by an individual on a one-to-one basis will remain confidential unless the following circumstances prevail:

- There is a direct effect on the safety of individuals
- There is a safeguarding issue as specified by BEACON's Safeguarding Policy
- A person is threatening to harm themselves or others

A service user's permission will be obtained before disclosing personal data to a third party. This will normally be done through the completion of a consent to share information form. The only time this will be overridden is if:

- There is a safeguarding issue
- There is a need to protect the vital interests of the service user (i.e. it is a life or death situation)
- BEACON is required by law to do so
- BEACON is assisting in the prevention or detection of a crime

Where external agencies have ongoing relationships with service users, all parties concerned will agree boundaries of confidentiality.

2.2 Information about ex-service users

Confidentiality is just as important for ex-service users of BEACON. This policy and procedure applies equally to ex-service users in this situation. See BEACON's Data Protection Policy for information on how long data will be kept about ex-service users.

2.3 Information about staff, volunteers, and trustees

Under no circumstances will information relating to staff members, volunteers or trustees be given to any individual or an organisation without the permission of that person. Confidentiality may be overridden in the circumstances outlined above for service users.

3. Disclosure of personal information about service users to outside agencies

BEACON works closely with other organisations to support service users. In some cases, this may involve the sharing of personal information. BEACON will only share information with a third party if a service user has signed a consent form giving BEACON authority to do so. The consent form will state why there is a need to share information and with whom.

All information shared must be done so in a safe and secure manner. It is the duty of the staff member sharing the information to ensure that the information has been received by the correct recipient. It is the responsibility of the staff member passing on any information to ensure that disclosure only takes place on the terms agreed with the service user it concerns.

Information should only be given to other organisations with the service user's permission, with the exception of the circumstances set out in this policy when disclosures may be made without consent.

4. Publicity and public relations

Staff or volunteers may not become involved with the media in relation to the operations of the charity except with the expressed permission of the Team Leader.

Any case studies or quotes about service users and/or volunteers shared publicly will be anonymised unless explicit consent has been given by the service user and/or volunteer.

Similarly, any photos or video footage of service users and/or volunteers shared publicly will only be done so with express permission from the service user/volunteer in question.

5. Maintaining confidentiality

Staff and volunteers should be aware of their surroundings when discussing confidential matters with a service user. Confidential or sensitive matters must not be discussed in public places or in the presence of other clients.

Staff and volunteers should be particularly aware of what clients should know about each other, which may be confidential i.e. with regard to illnesses, details of asylum cases, etc.

In no circumstances should any confidential information be shared publicly via any method of communication (including online and via social media channels).

6. Breaches of confidentiality

Any breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously and should be reported as soon as possible. All concerns that information may have been breached must be reported to the Team Leader for investigation as soon as the breach has been identified. Breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the seriousness of the breach. Breaches of confidentiality may be considered gross misconduct and action may be taken in line with BEACON's Disciplinary Policy (for staff) and Volunteering Policy (for volunteers).

This policy should be read and used in conjunction with BEACON's Data Protection Policy.