



# Confidentiality Policy



## **Interest Link Borders Confidentiality Policy**

### **Introduction**

Interest Link Borders recognises that the handling of identifiable written, verbal and computerised information is necessary for effective functioning of the organisation. Information is held about Service Users, Volunteers, and Employees.

The main aims of this policy are to:

- ensure that information given in trust is treated with respect
- ensure that information is protected through clarity about how it is to be stored and shared
- ensure that the boundaries of confidentiality are clear, and understood by all.

### **Aims Of The Policy**

The aims are to:

- protect the best interests of Service Users, Volunteers, and Employees.
- make explicit the responsibilities of all parties concerning confidentiality
- ensure Volunteers, and Employees are aware of our responsibilities to protect confidential information.

### **Procedure When Confidentiality Is Broken**

Volunteers and Employees are required to maintain confidentiality in accordance with this policy. Inappropriate disclosures will be treated as a disciplinary matter and dealt with by the Project Co-ordinator, in accordance with our disciplinary procedures.

### **Exceptional Disclosure Of Information**

Exceptional circumstances may occur where the protection of a Service User, Volunteer, Employee or a third party or another person must be ensured and to do so would involve disclosure of information, whether or not agreement has been reached with party affected. In this situation, the Volunteer or Employee involved should follow the procedures set down in Interest Link Borders's Policy on Protection of Vulnerable Adults.

The Project Co-ordinator will conform with Health and Safety legislation by informing people of any notification received about contagious or notifiable disease suffered by any person with whom members of the workforce may have had contact in conducting their work.

In the event of a serious issue arising of a line management nature, (e.g. professional misconduct), Volunteers or Employees may, within the Policy, raise it with the Project Co-ordinator with our without the Volunteer or Employee's agreement and it will be dealt with in accordance with the Interest Link Borders Complaints Procedure.

Finally, there is a legal requirement to disclose information in the event of a policy enquiry which has the back up of necessary legal documentation.

## **Information And Training**

All Volunteers, Committee Members and Employees will be provided with this policy document and new Volunteers, Committee Members and Employees will receive a copy of this policy on taking up appointment. We will provide Volunteer and Employee training on issues relating to confidentiality and the contents of this policy in order to ensure that work practices are in line with the requirements. Employees will inform Service Users and Carers of this policy document and ensure a copy is available to them.

## **Personnel Files**

Personnel files are confidential, with access to a Volunteer's or Employee's file being limited to the relevant Branch Co-ordinator and Administrator, the Project Co-ordinator and to that individual at anytime, during office hours. The Administrator has access to these files only when personnel issues arise and to keep files up to date. Access to the Project Co-ordinator's personnel files is limited to the Project Co-ordinator and the Project Administrator for the purposes already outlined. Personnel files will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, with the relevant Branch Co-ordinator and Administrator or the Project Co-ordinator or Administrator holding the keys.

## **Personal Issues Affecting Volunteers or Employees**

Volunteers and Employees have the option of discussing personal issues adversely affecting their work in confidence with their Branch Co-ordinator or the Project Co-ordinator. That Co-ordinator can then take appropriate measures to address these issues without breaking confidentiality, subject to the Volunteer's or Employee's agreement. This may include discussion with an appropriate other person, and placing a record of this into the Volunteer's or Employee's personal file.

When sickness leave is taken by an Employee, a self-certification note will be sent to the Project Co-ordinator. Information on the nature of the illness will not be made known to other Employees. To ensure this, self-certification notes should be submitted in a sealed envelope and marked confidential.

## **Phone Calls And Letters**

Any mail sent to a staff member and marked Private and/or Confidential will not be opened by another member of staff. This applies particularly to Police Check correspondence which may not be opened by anyone other than the addressee or the Project Co-ordinator

## **Monitoring And Reviewing The Policy**

The working of this policy will be monitored regularly, with a record of the number and nature of formal complaints being held by the Project Co-ordinator for monitoring purposes. A review of this policy will take place within a year of its adoption to ensure its effective operation.