



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy document is to establish a clear understanding of what confidentiality means within Saffires, to establish uniformity in practice and to ensure that service users know what they can expect in practice from the organisation.
- 1.2 Saffires recognises that confidentiality in the service it provides is an important factor in determining the level of trust and security service users invest in the project.
- 1.3 There are instances where Saffires staff and volunteers have to divulge confidential information. In those instances we will always try to talk with services users first and would prefer, where possible, that they would take the relevant information to the relevant organisations themselves.

2.0 PRINCIPLES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 2.1 **Casual or social discussion about service users conducted between Saffires staff and volunteers or between staff or volunteers and other service users is strictly prohibited.**
- 2.2 Information given to any staff member or volunteer may be shared with other staff members or volunteers on a 'need to know' basis, i.e. the key points. Discussion about any service user with other members of the organisation should be purposeful and not trivialising. In all situations where a service user is discussed the questions must be asked as to what advantage it is for the service user.
- 2.3 Names of service users can be used within Saffires when referring to the service users for prayer purposes within outreach or befriending teams.
- 2.4 Reasonable care should be taken to ensure that discussion, conversations and telephone calls relating to confidential matters cannot be overheard.
- 2.5 In the event of Saffires staff or volunteers receiving supervision from external supervisors and issues about work with service users are being discussed, no information will be given which could lead to the identification of the service users.

3.0 DISCLOSURE TO A THIRD PARTY

- 3.1 Information about service users given to Saffires staff or volunteers will be treated as confidential to the project. **Exceptional circumstances where information cannot be kept confidential is outlined in paragraph 7.2.**
- 3.2 A user of Saffires' services must have given their written permission before any information can be passed on to a third party where that information specifically

identifies them or might lead to their identification, except in the circumstances outlined in paragraph 7.2. Reports and letters written about or on behalf of service users should be approved by the service user before they are released. Reports for court may have to be presented without the clearance of the service user. However, the content of all reports and letters must have been previously discussed and agreed with the service user. Saffires staff and volunteers are bound to reflect the true state of treatment and will not provide information selectively to produce a false picture.

- 3.3 The service user has the right to withhold consent, either in regard to a specific piece of information or agency. In very exceptional circumstances (see paragraph 7.2) a Saffires staff member or volunteer may have to disclose information without permission.
- 3.4 Complete confidentiality to a member of staff or a volunteer can be a very negative experience and difficult situations involving service users should be shared with the Saffires team responsible for the area of work where possible and appropriate. The service user should be informed of this when disclosing the information.

4.0 RECORD KEEPING

- 4.1 Saffires' record keeping system includes using paper files and computers. Every contact made with a service user is recorded. This information is needed to monitor and improve the service provided to individual service users and to develop practices.
- 4.2 Saffires will maintain an appropriate level of security (in accordance with the Data Protection Act and this policy) that protects information about individual service users held within the service. All files, both paper and electronic will be kept in a secure area.
- 4.3 Each individual user of the service has a right to see any information that Saffires keeps on them in paper files and to change that information where it is inaccurate. A service user's records will clearly indicate a clear distinction between fact and opinion. Service users do not have automatic access to information that has been provided by a third party without the express permission from the third party.

5.0 USE OF INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH OR REPORTS

- 5.1 Information used for reports, development or funding will be presented as statistics, aggregate data or aggregate testimonies thus ensuring that confidentiality is maintained and that individuals cannot be identified.

6.0 STAFF TRAINING

- 6.1 Staff and volunteers have been given training and instruction in order to ensure that they have a clear understanding of how principles of confidentiality are put into practice.

7.0 BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 7.1 If a service user is concerned about a breach of confidentiality by a member of Saffires staff or a volunteer, a subsequent complaint will be handled within Saffires' complaints procedures.
- 7.2 **Exceptions:** Saffires cannot operate a policy of absolute confidentiality. In any of the following situations, Saffires staff may breach confidentiality to the relevant legal and statutory agencies:
- 7.2.1 Saffires staff suspect a child is at risk, may become at risk or has suffered significant harm;
 - 7.2.2 the life of a service user, volunteer, employee, or other individual is at risk of immediate harm;
 - 7.2.3 the service user requires urgent medical treatment
 - 7.2.4 the service user is being terrorised by an abuser, or is being held, or is under significant threat;
 - 7.2.5 the service user is intending to take their own life or cause themselves significant harm;
 - 7.2.6 failure to breach confidentiality would result in a child or another adult being harmed;
 - 7.2.7 a service user discloses they are intending to commit a serious crime i.e. serious assault or murder;
 - 7.2.8 a service user is considered by Saffires staff to have insufficient understanding to make a decision;
 - 7.2.9 the mental, emotional or physical state is such that they are not able to make an informed decision about their own personal safety or the safety of others;
 - 7.2.10 a Saffires staff member or volunteer is alleged to be the perpetrator of abuse.
- If any one or more of the situations above occurs the staff member, or volunteer will consult with the Project Coordinator(s) to determine the appropriate course of action. In the event that action becomes necessary, the Project Coordinator(s) will seek to notify the service user of the action that has to be taken, and why it has to be taken.
- 7.3 Due to the nature of the project it is almost inevitable that service users will be involved in activities that are against the law. Any legal issues relating to information which should be passed on to the Police or Social Services, should, if possible, be discussed with the service user. It is very important to pass this information to the Project Coordinator(s) especially when a staff member or volunteer knows or suspects that a service user is being abused, or a service user discloses they are being abused.