

Churches for Tunbridge Wells

Tunbridge Wells Churches' Winter Shelter



An Ecumenical Christian Charity_
www.tunbridgewellschurcheswintershelter.co.uk

Confidentiality Policy

Approved by Management Committee: December 2015

Date of Review: December 2017

Confidentiality Policy & Notes

Everybody can be affected by confidentiality issues and it is important that volunteers realize that it is not only clients and client information that this applies to, but also to volunteer issues and individuals as the day-to-day work of groups and organizations as a whole.

Why is Confidentiality Important?

Often volunteers have direct access to guests and their information. They build up relationships with guests based on trust. It is this aspect that gives rise for the need for clear policies on confidentiality. Volunteers may not be able to keep a secret, or respect a confidence if the person is subsequently at risk. Groups or organizations also need to consider why they are holding information on a guest or a volunteer. Do they really need the information? Who has access to this information? It is worth noting that Team Leaders and the Project Manager / Support Worker are bound by this Policy so if in doubt, you can share information with them confident that they will then keep it confidential as appropriate.

1. Volunteers need to be able to:

- Build up relationships with guests
- Understand the need for confidentiality
- Understand the reason for the confidentiality policy
- Understand the guest must not be put at risk
- Deal calmly and confidentially with information given
- Know who to report to

2. Volunteers need support:

- They need to be able to deal with a situation, and realize that it is not their place to provide solutions
- Some information may shock the volunteer

a Policy Statement

As people offering support to individuals who use this shelter we may have access to personal information. This is a relationship of trust, which needs to be respected. Information gained about people must be treated as confidential.

b. Confidentiality Definition

Confidentiality is maintaining the security of information obtained from or about an individual, which has been gained through a professional working relationship. This information can only be shared in restricted circumstances such as when there is a legal compulsion or it is required to ensure the well-being of the person. Some information will need to be shared with people/agencies who directly contribute to the provision of services and who are bound by the principles of confidentiality. Personal information should be defined as information any person would consider to be private.

C. Principles

Information can be shared in restricted circumstances. Even in restricted circumstances, information can only be shared on a need-to-know basis. This should be with people who are directly concerned and who are also bound by the rules of confidentiality. Information can be shared when it indicates that the person or other individuals are at risk of serious harm. It is necessary to disclose information concerning abuse. This would include instances when the person was engaging in or contemplating serious self-harm. Information can be shared when a court has issued an order compelling disclosure. Courts of Law have the power to compel provision of information.