



Survivors'
Network

Survivors' Network Confidentiality Policy

Key Contact: CEO

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Confidentiality Policy

Philosophy:

Survivors' Network works with vulnerable clients who need the protection of a strong confidentiality policy in order to allow every service user to build trust with the organisation. Each member of staff, self-employed specialist, volunteer and trustee is responsible for upholding confidentiality within the organisation. Inappropriate breaking of confidentiality is considered to be grounds for gross misconduct and instant dismissal.

Values:

This policy has been designed by Survivors' Network for the purpose of protecting confidentiality for its service users, volunteers, staff, trustees and contracted staff. It provides guidance to all concerned on the extent to which confidentiality is to be preserved, circumstances in which it may be breached and measures to be taken in either eventuality. Inappropriate breaking of confidentiality is considered to be grounds for gross misconduct and immediate dismissal. It is in line with our Child Protection Policy, Vulnerable Adult Policy, Data Protection Policy, and Pre-trial Therapy Policy and information sharing agreements.

Survivors' Network acknowledges the courage and confidence it takes to make any disclosure of personal information; therefore, we aim to treat all information with the respect and confidentiality it deserves.

All Survivors' Network staff, volunteers, counsellors, trustees and contracted staff are expected to respect the right of service users, other staff, volunteers, counsellors, trustees and contracted staff, to privacy and confidentiality as far as possible within the constraints of legal requirements and the safety of other people.

All information acquired about Survivors' Network, its practices, its service users and any financial or professional information, by its staff, contractual or otherwise, volunteers, counsellors and trustees is confidential and must not be discussed outside of the reporting procedure within the organisation.

Absolute confidentiality regarding service users cannot be guaranteed and this will be made clear to all service users at the earliest possible opportunity. There are particular limitations to the service that clients can be offered if they are pre-trial or contemplating criminal proceedings against their abuser.

Where it is thought necessary to pass on information to another organisation, this will be on a strictly “need to know” basis.

This policy covers not only information given deliberately by the person concerned or by other people about the person or organisation, but also information acquired accidentally or through observation or third party.

Legal and Statutory Requirements:

The general law does not give an absolute right to confidentiality except where there is a contractual provision to this effect. Exceptions that specifically affect the workings of Survivors’ Network are:

1. Passing on information on terrorist activity to the police
2. Passing on intelligence about drug dealing activity
3. Giving evidence in court if a subpoena is issued
4. Child/Adult protection and safeguarding

It may therefore be necessary to breach confidentiality where there is a serious risk of harm to a particular person or persons or to the safety and well-being of the organisation. For more information about the organisation’s procedures for clients who are expressing suicidal intention please see the separate suicide policy.

Sharing information on a “need to know” basis should take into account:

- The nature and extent of the information involved
- The purpose of disclosing such information
- Whether the disclosure of information is an appropriate response in the context of safeguarding the welfare of the individual to whom it may relate or the organisation.

Implementation:

Client Confidentiality Statement

Everything a client discusses with a Survivors’ Network worker will normally remain confidential within Survivors’ Network. Workers may discuss your case with their clinical supervisor or in group supervision. Where possible we will protect your identity in these discussions. Outside of the counselling service workers may discuss your case with other members of their service in order to plan how best to assist you or on a need to know basis. Rarely there may be exceptional circumstances where, because of a legal requirement, Pre-trial therapy procedures or where there is a concern for your health and safety or that of others, it may be necessary to speak to an external organisation or service. In all situations we would seek to talk to you before we do so.

To help us maintain the levels of support we can offer you and demonstrate the success of the service, we keep a record of the contact we have with you. These records are held securely by the organisation and in line with our Data Protection policy.

Information provided by clients or staff about the workings of the organisation is confidential to the organisation. Information may be passed between different services within the organisation on a need to know basis and in the majority of cases with the client’s consent.

The following general principals apply;

- No information about a service user will be given to a third party, including their families and professionals involved in their care, without their express permission

- No information about the organisation, including financial information and personnel issues, will be discussed with external organisation except with the prior permission of the Management Committee or Director
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times. If appropriate request an alternative venue for your conversation

Service Implementation:

- Service users should only be discussed with internal staff in an appropriate environment, for a specific purpose
- Volunteers should not discuss the identities of the other volunteers with service users or externally to the organisation
- A volunteer may choose to use their own first name, (surnames are not to be divulged), or use a consistent pseudonym if preferred
- No identifying information about staff or volunteers should be given to clients or members of the public without their consent
- Any written notes made during helpline sessions that may identify the service user should be destroyed
- Volunteers and staff will not arrange to meet service users outside of the professional boundaries of the organisation
- Pre-trial clients have limitations on the service they can expect from Survivors' Network. Clients who have reported their abuse to the police and are waiting for a court case are able to discuss the effects of their abuse with us but not details of the abuse or incident(s). If details of the incident(s) are given they will have to be recorded and may be disclosed to the police or CPS
- Helpline operators are not to use the helpline for making or receiving personal calls, unless in an emergency
- When a volunteer, trustee or staff member leaves the organisation she remains bound by this confidentiality agreement
- If a caller phones the helpline requesting to speak with a specific helpline operator, the operator should not disclose the identity of the person she is working with during that or any other session. An operator must not pass the phone over to another operator while working, unless there are valid reasons for doing so e.g. if the operator feels ill, or if the caller or operator know each other
- Care must be taken to protect the identities of staff, volunteers and service users when dealing with the media, funders or other external public bodies
- Confidential information relating to personnel or the financial running of the organisation must be stored securely and appropriately in accordance with the organisation's Data Protection Policy
- Service users will not be identified by name in Management Committee Meeting agendas or minutes

Procedures for Disclosure of information:

- If applicable, first consult with the person involved in an attempt to gain their co-operation in effecting an amicable and safe resolution. If it is not appropriate or safe or possible to discuss with the client first, then consult with your line manager or clinical supervisor
- Consult your direct line manager if you consider there is good reason to break the rules of confidentiality. If she is not available, please contact your clinical supervisor or the chair of trustees
- Follow the Survivors' Network Incident procedure for the recording and reporting of all disclosure of information to an external body following the reporting guidelines set out in the organisation's safeguarding protocols