



## The Hope Programme

### Confidentiality Policy and Procedure

**The aim of this policy is to set out clearly for clients, staff, volunteers, partners and external agencies how The Hope Programme will manage personal information. The policy and linked procedures apply to all our services and interventions with clients.**

#### **Introduction**

The Hope Programme's confidential policy/procedure is set out below. All paid and voluntary workers and Steering Group members are expected to abide by this policy. Clients using our service will have the relevant aspects of the confidentiality policy explained to them. Clients, including significant others will need to sign the confidentiality form, which sets out the limits to their confidentiality.

- 1.1** The principle of this procedure is to ensure that the safety of those in contact with The Hope Programme is maintained and that their rights are protected. The Hope Programme is committed to maintaining high standards of confidentiality in all aspects of its work. This includes records and information pertaining to employees, clients and prospective clients. Breaches of confidentiality may jeopardise the well-being of staff and clients and consequently will be subject to review.
- 1.2** The purpose of this procedure is to give guidelines on maintaining confidentiality and the circumstances where disclosures may be necessary and the procedure for doing so.

Once consent has been obtained, it is the responsibility of the person passing on any information to ensure that this is only done on the terms agreed.

**1.3** Disclosure of confidential information may require written authorisation by the individual concerned. This should be dated and specify to whom disclosure is authorised, for example if you are requesting information from a person's GP.

## **2. Disclosure of information relating to clients**

### **2.1 Safeguarding**

2.1.1 In cases where there are concerns relating to safeguarding of vulnerable adults and minors The Hope Programme safeguarding policy will apply.

#### **Client files**

2.1.2 All clients have the right to view their files. However, no clients will have access to any information from a third party (e.g. the client's partner or parents.) This is to protect the safety and confidentiality of others. Therefore, third party information should be stored separately within the client record. All computer records will be password protected and compliant with The Hope Programme IT security procedures.

#### **Victim confidentiality**

2.1.3 Women and men can contact The Hope Programme without anyone outside The Hope Programme knowing they have done so. Anything that is said to us, either on the phone or in person, is confidential to The Hope Programme, except where disclosure could prevent serious harm to others.

2.1.4 If a person asks us to pass information on to any third party we will do so under the following conditions:

- If she/he has asked us to liaise on her behalf with another statutory or voluntary agency
- If she/he has requested disclosure of information we will explore with her/him the possible implications of such disclosure before it is made. Where The Hope Programme staff and volunteers are considering including information obtained in reports to the police, courts, children's services, the probation service or other agencies this must be discussed with her/him and the implications explored. The report writer should be fully aware of who will have access to the report. Any concerns should be discussed in the appropriate case management or team meeting setting with The Hope Programme clinical and business leads. Disclosure of information that may increase risk should be considered only on rare occasions after discussion with the clinical and business leads and that discussion should be notes in the case file.
- We will discuss with her/him any limitations or provisos she/he wishes to make regarding disclosure.
- It is not the role of any member of staff or volunteer to mediate or pass information between alleged victims, their significant others and alleged perpetrators.

#### **Joint Working with Other Agencies**

4.1.1 Where The Hope Programme is engaged in collaborative working with another agency it should be made explicit to the client what information will be shared

and how her/his confidentiality will be protected. To ensure this the staff member should be fully aware of the confidentiality policy of the other agency and seek assurance that they are able to maintain confidentiality as outlined above.

## **Men's Confidentiality**

- 4.1.2 Information concerning male clients in contact with this organisation will be treated as confidential and no information, which could lead to men or their partners/ex-partners being identified, shall be disclosed to anyone outside The Hope Programme.

## **Confidentiality between Clients**

- 4.1.3 The Hope Programme cannot guarantee that other clients will maintain each other's confidentiality but we will take every reasonable step to ensure that they do so. When clients meet each other in group settings the issue of confidentiality will be discussed with them and clients will be asked to maintain each other's confidentiality. In particular women will be asked not to divulge information to their (ex-) partners about other women. The fact that The Hope Programme cannot guarantee confidentiality will be raised.
- 4.1.4 Certain types of sensitive information for example, if a client is HIV positive, has ARC or AIDS) MUST NOT be passed on without the client's permission.

## **Information about Staff and Volunteers**

- 4.1.5 A request for staff or volunteers home address and telephone number will always be referred to the individual concerned before any information is disclosed. Staff and volunteers should never divulge a colleague's personal circumstances, including their address, future work place, contact details, to anyone without permission of the primary person.

## **Information within The Hope Programme**

- 4.1.6 This section gives guidance where staff and volunteers are discussing clients amongst themselves/discussing a client with another agency on the telephone/when clients visit The Hope Programme office:
- 4.1.7 Make sure any discussion happens in an appropriate place, e.g. not in an office where other staff are working or where people are coming in and out of the place.
- 4.1.8 Do not gossip about clients with other clients, staff or members of the Management Group. Do not discuss personal facts about one client with another client or in the presence of another client.
- 4.1.9 Do not write derogatory comments about clients in their files, or anywhere else.
- 4.1.10 Do not leave information lying around or on screen but replace it in the appropriate place (locked filing cabinets).

## **5. Record Keeping**

This procedure covers all records held by The Hope Programme concerning staff, clients, potential trustees, steering group members.

### **5.1 Personnel Records**

- 5.1.1 All staff and volunteers will be given a copy of the confidentiality procedure as part of their induction. The implications of the procedure for their work will be explained.
- 5.1.2 Access to personnel files can be arranged with the Business Lead, who should make clear the following:
- Who has access to files and procedure for gaining access
  - How the information is stored, e.g. locked cabinet
- 5.1.3 Referral notes interview records and monitoring forms are confidential to The Hope Programme.
- 5.1.4 Equal opportunity monitoring forms will be detached from application forms on receipt and kept separate from application forms.
- 5.1.5 References - when seeking references for a new volunteer it is made clear to the referees that information is sought in confidence.
- 5.1.6 Probationary reviews and appraisals. The business manager should make clear who receives information on the review.
- 5.1.7 Medical records will be held on personnel files in a sealed envelope. Copies of medical certificates and self-certification forms will be placed on personnel files after action for payroll purposes.
- 5.1.8 Breaches of confidentiality by staff will normally be treated within the remit of The Hope Programme's disciplinary and grievance procedure. The nature of any breaches of this procedure will determine the level of disciplinary action, e.g. disclosure of unauthorised victim details would be gross misconduct.

## **5.2 Clients**

- 5.2.1 All existing clients will be informed of this procedure and can be provided with a copy if requested.
- 5.2.2 A file concerning each client will be kept by The Hope Programme managers. The information recorded will be factual and where an opinion is recorded it will be clear that this is opinion and what this is based on.
- 5.2.3 This information should be kept in a filing cabinet, which is kept locked. All files must be returned to the cabinet after use.
- 5.2.4 If a client asks to see their file, the relevant staff member should organise this and answer any questions about it and explain what has been written. The Hope Programme asks that clients give at least 24 hours notice when requesting access to their files.
- 5.2.5 All clients are protected under the Data Protection Act 1988.
- 5.2.6 Clients are expected to respect the rights of other clients to confidentiality and privacy particularly as regards personal information known about another client.
- 5.2.7 Information will be kept for five years once a client has left The Hope Programme It will then be destroyed or archived.

## **5.3 Steering Group**

- 5.3.1 New Steering Group members will be sent a copy of the confidentiality procedure and asked to take responsibility for implementing it.

5.3.2 All Steering Group papers of a confidential nature will be marked 'Private and Confidential' and not included in the papers that are made public or widely available within The Hope Programme.

5.3.3 Clients will not normally be referred to by name, and discussion of their personal details at Steering Group meetings will be only by exception.

#### **5.4 Partnerships with other organisations**

5.5 The Hope Programme may be working in partnership with other organisations. Where specific information-sharing protocols exist that affect a particular client all agencies should be aware of this.

5.6 The Hope Programme will give all partnership agencies a copy of the confidentiality procedure and will explain the requirements it places on the partnership organisations.

5.7 It will be agreed at the outset which staff in the partner organisation will have access to information and in what circumstances.

5.8 Management agreements will state that breaches of confidentiality by either party will be treated as a breach of the agreement.

#### **5.9 Training**

5.10 Training on the confidentiality policy and its implications should be a standard part of induction procedures for staff, volunteers and Steering Group members.

This policy was reviewed on 1 April 2015