

The Snowflake Trust Limited

Operating The Snowflake Winter Night Shelter

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

When talking to *Guests* it is important not to push for information.

- Please acknowledge that some guests may feel hurt or let down by some experiences and may not wish to talk about them.
- Others will like nothing better than to tell you their story.
- Please respect a *Guest's* confidentiality and do not allow your conversation to become common gossip especially with other guests or volunteers.

Confidentiality is important for building trust; however, it is not about keeping secrets and this should be made clear to guests.

- you may keep a conversation in confidence so long as you do not feel burdened or uncomfortable about what has been shared.
- If things become too demanding, tell the *Guest* that you may have to tell the *Project Manager* what is being said in order to get appropriate help.
- It is then up to the *Guest* as to whether they want to continue.

If you feel there is a threat to another person or to the safety of the Shelter you should tell your *Community Coordinator/Shift Leader* immediately.

1. Policy Statement

As people offering support to individuals who use the night shelter, we will be privileged to know personal information. This is a relationship of trust, which needs to be respected. Information gained about people must be treated as being confidential.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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
- A court has issued an Order compelling disclosure; courts of law have the power to compel provision of information
- It is required to ensure that the person receives the necessary care and support
- The person concerned has given consent:
 - Efforts must be made to ensure that the person's consent is based on an informed and free choice
 - It is recognised that some people may not be able to give or express their opinion about consent or non-consent
 - In this case, a decision to share information should be based on a best interest principle and a reasonable assumption that if the person had the capacity, they would consent
 - In any cases of doubt, Volunteers should refer to the Shift Leader at whose discretion reference may be made to the Project Manager.

These are the only circumstances in which information about a person can be shared.

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