



FIRST STOP CENTRE

Confidentiality of Information Policy

Introduction

1. It is the policy of First Stop Centre to keep only those personal records that are necessary for the proper operation of the Centre. These records are the property of First Stop Centre and this information is confidential to the members of staff and the Management Committee who need access to it to carry out their duties. Nevertheless, First Stop is committed to providing visitors and staff with access to any personal record made concerning them, with the minimum formality and delay.
2. It is also the policy of First Stop Centre to maintain visitor confidentiality. Information about visitors and their reasons for attending First Stop will be kept confidential by staff and not disclosed to third parties. Only in circumstances when First Stop's safeguarding policies might be compromised, for example, in order to prevent harm to the visitor or a third party, will staff consider it necessary to disclose relevant information.

Types of Records Maintained

3. The attendance of visitors at the Centre and the type of service used by them are recorded in order to report service take-up to the Management Committee and to funding agencies; these statistics are also used to monitor the workload on the staff.
4. Records of personal details are kept on visitors. The Record Keeping and Access to Records policy sets out the arrangements applied to these details.
5. Complaints made by, or about, a visitor are recorded as part of the complaints procedure and the quality monitoring process.
6. Incidents involving a visitor are recorded as part of the incident procedure and to allow the monitoring of staff working conditions.
7. Staff records, including references, are kept for personnel purposes, such as recruitment, employment and review.

Access to Files

8. No records are stored using electronic media. All paper records are kept in locked cabinets to which the Centre Manager and the staff have access in respect of visitors. Personnel records of staff are available only to the Centre Manager.
9. Outside agencies shall have access to personal information about visitors or staff members only with the permission of that person, unless it is clear that an alleged



contravention of Civil or Criminal law is involved, or if it is felt that individuals present a significant threat to themselves and/or others at a particular time.

10. A visitor or a member of staff may request access to all of the records that relate to him or her. First Stop Centre will make such records available for inspection within a reasonable time. See Access to Records Policy.

Committees

11. New members of the Management Committee will be given a copy of the Confidentiality of Information Policy and asked to sign that they have received it and will take responsibility for implementing it.
12. Reports made to, or by, the Management Committee or its sub-committees shall refer to visitors by name and include other personal information about them only when this is necessary. This practice may be relaxed only with the express permission of the visitor to be discussed.
13. Any discussions by the Management Committee or its sub-committees relating to individual members of staff or visitors shall be confidential to that committee, unless it is essential to inform an outside agency.

Guidelines to Staff and Visitors

14. Staff shall not discuss visitors' personal information with anyone outside the work setting.
15. Staff shall not discuss visitors' personal information with any other visitor or with anyone who does not need to be informed of it. Staff may discuss visitors with a person appointed by the Management Committee to give them supervision, given that such discussions remain entirely confidential.
16. When recording information about visitors, such as complaints or incidents, staff shall ensure that comments are professional and factual.
17. Visitors are expected to respect the rights of other visitors to confidentiality and privacy, particularly as regards personal information about another visitor.
18. Staff will not discuss other staff members with visitors. If a visitor has a complaint about another member of staff, the Complaints procedure should be used.
19. Visitors and staff members should be aware that references to other visitors or staff members made in writing (for example, in complaints or incident reports) may be made available to those people.