

Forum Information and Advice Line Service Confidentiality Policy

The Forum Information and Advice Line Service is a confidential service. All employees are bound by a legal duty of confidence to protect personal information they may come into contact with during the course of their work. This is a contractual responsibility and a requirement with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The confidentiality policy in practice

1. Caller information is recorded only for the purpose of returning calls or sending out requested literature. This information is kept on a secure electronic database.
2. Information will only be released on a need-to-know basis when involved in providing an answer to a caller's request for advice or information and only then within the Information and Advice Line Service team. We do not pass on caller details unless this has been agreed with the caller.
3. We will only leave a message on your answer phone if we have your consent to do so.
4. Email correspondence is kept securely and electronically and will be forwarded only where necessary and with permission. Emails are kept until they are approx 1 month old in case the original is required to follow up an enquiry.
5. Statistical information relating to calls is collected for managerial and supervisory purposes and may be shared widely. However, this data is collated anonymously.

Exceptions when confidentiality can be broken:

On rare occasions we may, following a full consultation with the Information and Advice Line Manager decide to breach confidentiality. This would only be done if deemed necessary and is seen as being lawful to do so. In the absence of the Information and Advice Line Manager, this decision would be made another member of the Management team. If appropriate we will ask the caller for consent to break confidentiality. However we will not ask for consent if we feel that doing so would increase the risk of harm or death to others.

We may break confidentiality if, for example:

1. We suspect the caller has admitted an offence under the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act'
2. Where concerns have been raised about the safety of a child or vulnerable adult.
3. Physical violence against others where there may have been significant risk of death
4. Someone discloses that they have taken steps to kill themselves. We will ask if we may call an ambulance. An ambulance will be called if they give us their address or if the caller's location can be identified. If a caller discloses their address without giving consent to break confidentiality, we would still call an ambulance.
5. Confidentiality can be broken if a statute or court order requires this.
6. Confidentiality can be broken where there is a concern for the safety of members of the Information and Advice Line Service team.

Responsibilities of Forum Information and Advice Line Service staff

The Information and Advice Line Manager will ensure that all staff are sufficiently trained to fully understand the scope of this policy and how to implement it in practice, through compulsory annual training.

Responsibilities of Forum Information and Advice Line Service users

Callers must take responsibility for the information they divulge.

Callers should ensure that they are happy with the content of this policy and raise any questions they may have with staff.

This confidentiality policy is available on request.

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