



Confidentiality Policy

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Confidentiality Policy

Autism Bedfordshire offers a range of services to people with autism, their carers and interested professionals. We believe that confidentiality is an important issue. This policy explains how confidentiality is maintained within the organisation and what to do when this poses difficult dilemmas.

Autism Bedfordshire recognises that any person has the right to expect that any information given to Autism Bedfordshire will be used for the purpose for which it was given and should not be released to any other, inside or outside the organisation without their consent.

The right to privacy is essential to ensure that clients have trust and confidence in the organisation and are treated with dignity and respect.

Further, the principle of confidentiality should extend to any information about the internal affairs of Autism Bedfordshire and should be equally adhered to by its trustees, staff and volunteers.

What should be regarded as confidential?

Everything that is said to anyone working for or on behalf of Autism Bedfordshire should be regarded as confidential.

Similarly in meetings (training, staff and volunteer meetings, committee meetings) any discussion of clients/members of the organisation and issues that have arisen should be regarded as confidential.

Records

Where it is necessary, records are kept about members and clients. Only information that is relevant to the service(s) that person is using should be stored.

Records may be passed between different services within Autism Bedfordshire, but only with that person's agreement.

Records are kept either manually, in a locked filing cabinet or on computer with limited access.

Computer records comply with the Data Protection Act and are confidential.

Members of Autism Bedfordshire have a right to inspect their records on request, and to alter the information if it is incorrect and to retain a copy for their personal use.

All records should be based on fact, not on personal opinion.

Records are reviewed in line with the data protection recommendations, at regular intervals and destroyed if no longer required.

Disclosure of information

Information on members should only be disclosed to a third party with their permission.

Anyone working for Autism Bedfordshire should ensure that when they disclose information, the third party is aware that it is confidential and that this will be respected.

Members/clients have the right to veto any disclosure and this should be respected.

When someone is referred to another service, either within Autism Bedfordshire or outside, he/she has the right to know and should give permission for the referral.

The success of Autism Bedfordshire depends on trustees, staff and volunteers maintaining the confidence of members and clients. Any worker found to neglect or misuse a client's confidence will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Representing Autism Bedfordshire

All trustees, staff and volunteers represent Autism Bedfordshire. If asked for an opinion on a specific area of interest, they must remain impartial and supportive of the organisation's overall policy of being an information provider, to all areas of thought, especially with regard to the treatment of autism.

Any individual giving a personal opinion must do so by proclaiming it is a personal opinion and not a view of the Autism Bedfordshire. If in doubt, speak to one of the members of the Board of Trustees.

Dilemma

Sometimes, maintaining a policy of confidentiality can lead to a dilemma. For example, it could mean putting a life at risk or being party to criminal behaviour. Dealing with such a situation is never easy.

As a first stage in such a situation, the dilemma should be discussed with the client and see if it can be resolved.

If it cannot, the dilemma should be discussed with the line manager.

In exceptional cases, with the line manager's agreement, confidentiality may need to be broken.

If this situation arises, the client should be informed of what happening at all stages and the reasons why explained.