

# CSWS Confidentiality Policy

## Purpose of this Policy

Carers Support West Sussex (CSWS) is committed to respecting and protecting the confidentiality of everyone who contacts our Helpline and wider services.

This policy explains:

- What confidentiality means in practice at CSWS
- How information shared with us is treated
- The **limits of confidentiality**, including when information may need to be shared to keep people safe or to meet legal duties

This policy is intended to be clear and accessible to those using CSWS services as well as to staff and volunteers.

## Scope

This policy applies to:

- All contacts with carers (phone, email, webchat, groups, events and online services)
- All CSWS staff, volunteers, sessional workers and managers
- Any personal or sensitive information shared during contact with CSWS

This policy should be read alongside the **CSWS Privacy Policy**, which explains how personal data is processed, stored, shared and retained in line with data protection law. Staff and volunteers are also bound by the **CSWS Confidential Information Policy**, which sets out their responsibilities for handling confidential organisational and service-related information.

## What Confidentiality meant at CSWS

Confidentiality means that information shared with CSWS is treated with respect and care and is not shared unnecessarily.

We aim to ensure that:

- Information is only shared on a **need-to-know basis**
- Access to information is restricted to appropriate staff
- Records are stored securely
- Conversations with carers are handled sensitively and professionally

All staff are trained to explain confidentiality clearly and to check understanding where appropriate.

## Information covered by Confidentiality

Confidential information may include (but is not limited to):

- Personal details such as name, contact information and circumstances
- Information about caring roles and family situations
- Physical or mental health information
- Financial, employment or benefits information

- Safeguarding concerns or risks
- Any other information shared during contact with CSWS

### **When Information may be shared**

CSWS recognises that confidentiality is not absolute. There are circumstances where information may need to be shared.

We may share information **without consent** where:

- There is a risk of **serious harm** to the person contacting us or to others
- There are **safeguarding concerns**, including risks to children or adults at risk
- We are required to do so by **law** (for example, a court order)
- There is a serious concern about abuse, exploitation or criminal activity

Where possible and appropriate:

- We will explain the need to share information
- We will seek to involve the service user in the decision
- We will share the **minimum information necessary**

### **Safeguarding and Confidentiality**

Safeguarding takes priority over confidentiality where there is a risk of harm.

CSWS has clear safeguarding policies and procedures which set out:

- How risks are identified and responded to
- When information must be shared with statutory agencies
- How decisions are recorded and reviewed

All staff and volunteers are trained to recognise safeguarding concerns and to escalate these appropriately.

### **Recording and Access to Information**

- Contacts are recorded accurately and factually
- Records are stored securely in CSWS systems
- Access to records is restricted to authorised staff
- Information is retained in line with the CSWS Privacy Policy and retention schedules

### **Communicating Confidentiality to Service Users**

CSWS aims to be transparent about confidentiality from the outset.

Service users will be informed that:

- We treat what they tell us as confidential
- There are limits to confidentiality where safety or the law requires information to be shared

Clear information about confidentiality is available:

- On the CSWS website
- Through this Confidentiality Policy
- During contact with staff where appropriate

## Responsibilities

All CSWS staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Upholding this policy
- Maintaining professional boundaries
- Reporting concerns or breaches of confidentiality immediately

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring staff understand and apply this policy
- Providing guidance and supervision
- Taking appropriate action where breaches occur

## Breaches of Confidentiality

Any actual or suspected breach of confidentiality must be reported immediately in line with CSWS procedures.

Breaches will be:

- Taken seriously
- Investigated promptly
- Managed in line with data protection and safeguarding requirements

Please contact CSWS Data Protection Lead for any questions or concerns [dpo@carerssupport.org.uk](mailto:dpo@carerssupport.org.uk)

## Production History

Version Number	Date Created/Reviewed	Author/Reviewer	Production/Revision/Review	Date Approved by Board	Scheduled Review Date
1	Feb 26	V Hasted	Production		
2					
3					