



# CONFIDENTIALITY

## Purpose

The purpose of this Confidentiality Policy is to safeguard the privacy of individuals, maintain trust, and ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards. This policy provides guidelines on the handling of confidential information related to clients, beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, and the charity's operations.

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, and any third parties working with or for HARCSAC both during the completion of that work and afterwards. All individuals are expected to understand and comply with this policy to maintain the integrity of the charity's operations.

## Definition of Confidential Information

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Personal details of beneficiaries, clients, staff, and volunteers (e.g., names, contact information, health information, financial records).
- Sensitive organizational information, such as financial data, funding applications, donor details, and strategic plans.
- Any data that is protected by law (e.g., GDPR) or designated as confidential by the charity.

## Principles of Confidentiality

**Respect for Privacy:** Treat all information regarding individuals and the charity as private and disclose it only on a need-to-know basis.

**Legal Compliance:** Adhere to all relevant data protection laws, including the GDPR, and handle all data securely and responsibly.

**Transparency:** Clearly inform beneficiaries, clients, and staff about how their information will be used and secured.

## Confidentiality Guidelines

- Access to Confidential Information - Only authorised personnel should have access to confidential information relevant to their role.
- Personal information must not be disclosed to anyone outside the organisation unless legally required or with explicit consent.

## Storage and Security

**Physical Records:** Store all physical documents containing confidential information in locked, secure locations.

**Digital Records:** Protect electronic files with passwords, encryption, and secure backup systems. Access to digital files should be restricted to authorized personnel only.

**Data Disposal:** Shred physical documents and permanently delete digital files when they are no longer needed or when the retention period expires.



### **Communication of Confidential Information**

Do not discuss or disclose confidential information in public areas or with unauthorised individuals. When sharing information by phone, email, or other digital means, ensure secure communication channels are used, and verify the identity of the recipient.

### **Third-Party Access**

No confidential information will be shared with external parties (e.g., partners, health professionals, contractors) without explicit authorisation or in circumstances when the law dictates it – see client confidentiality below.

Any third parties must sign a confidentiality agreement ensuring their compliance with this policy.

### **Breaches of Confidentiality**

**Reporting:** Any suspected or actual breach of confidentiality must be reported immediately to the designated Data Protection Officer or a Trustee.

**Investigation:** The charity will investigate any reported breaches and take necessary corrective actions to prevent recurrence.

**Consequences:** Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement, and could lead to legal action if required by law.

### **Training and Awareness**

All staff and volunteers will receive training on this Confidentiality Policy during their induction and will be required to sign an agreement acknowledging their understanding and commitment to maintaining confidentiality.

## **CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY**

No information shared between a client and HARCSAC may be shared with any person outside of the organisation with the exception of the external supervisor(s). This includes confidentiality after volunteers/staff/supervisors have left the organisation.

We do not record the content of counselling meetings; however, counsellors may keep anonymised bullet points (one or two word) aide memoires to remind them of subjects to be explored in future sessions or objectives agreed.

We do collect anonymous statistical information which is collated annually for funding purposes. Clients can be provided with a copy of our Note Keeping and Disposal Policy for further information if required.



During any face-to-face meetings there are two volunteers present. We do not accept individual confidences.

Other than our supervisor(s), we will only seek advice or information from a third party with a client signed consent. Wherever possible we will be guided by the client to determine exactly what she wishes us to say or establish with any third party on her behalf.

### **Breaching Confidentiality**

HARCSAC will not be able to maintain its position on confidentiality in the following circumstances:

If there are grave concerns that an identifiable child/vulnerable adult is at risk of significant harm or if we become aware that there is current abuse of an identifiable vulnerable person. In these circumstances we will conduct a full and open discussion with the client/caller about our intended actions to inform the authorities.

We will continue working with the client/caller if they are prepared to work with us and the statutory organisations in stopping the abuse. If, however, they are not prepared to do this, then we will end all counselling with them.

If we are instructed by the courts to reveal details about you or receive a witness summons to appear in court.

Any changes to this policy will be notified to existing clients and made public on this website.

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### **Confidentiality Agreement**

All staff, volunteers, and third-party contractors are required to sign a confidentiality agreement as part of their onboarding process, acknowledging their responsibility to adhere to this policy.

Clients will be asked to confirm that they have understood our confidentiality policy.