

## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

*The pre-school is committed to ensuring that the needs of the young children in our care are kept safe and receive the appropriate support they need, when they need it. The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity to parents, carers, employees and outside agencies about the essential levels of confidentiality that are required within the pre-school. The pre-school expects everyone who works or visits the pre-school to adhere to this policy at all times.*

### **Introduction**

To maintain the confidence and trust of everyone using the pre-school, all members of staff, volunteers and trustees should act in a professional manner and observe the highest level of integrity at all times. Matters of a confidential and sensitive nature should only be discussed within the pre-school or outside the premises only on a need-to-know basis with relevant people, at appropriate times and in the correct setting.

### **Safeguarding children and families**

To be effective in its work, and to safeguard children and their families from suffering harm, abuse or neglect, the pre-school acknowledges there will be times when information will need to be shared within the pre-school and other agencies. By sharing information with other agencies, children and their families are more likely to access the services they need. This information may include matters which are sensitive and confidential, for example relating to child protection, family support, special education needs and CAFs.

When sharing information, consent, preferably in writing, will always be sought in the first place. However, there will be occasional, exceptional circumstances when this will not be possible such as:

- where consent cannot be obtained or is refused and the child is at risk of harm
- where seeking consent may undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime
- to protect children or other people from harm, to promote the welfare of children or to prevent a crime and disorder.

A decision whether to share information without consent is only taken following consideration of the needs, safety and welfare of a child. This decision is taken by the manager and trustees following consultation with relevant professionals. If there is any doubt, further advice and support is sought. Care is taken to ensure that the information shared is accurate, evidence based, up-to-date and secure and that it is

clear why, what and who will have access to some or all the information. All information is collated, documented and minutes of meetings are recorded. Decisions to share or not to share information are recorded in writing.

## **Storage and copying of information and children's data**

The storage of all information held at the pre-school complies with the Data Protection Act of 1998.

- Documents containing confidential information are stored in relevant files and secured in an appropriate place.
- Confidential files, information and data are not removed from the site without permission of the manager and only for specific, agreed purposes and for an agreed period.
- Documents, removed from files with permission, should be kept securely at all times and returned to the files as soon as possible or within the agreed time-frame.
- Additional copies of confidential information (other than those held by those that they relate to) are collected and shredded immediately following meetings by the person who has convened the meeting.
- Copying of confidential information is only made by those with authorisation and care is always taken to ensure copies are collected from printers immediately and not left in public places where they can be read. This also applies to the receiving or sending of faxes by checking fax numbers, telephoning beforehand and ensuring the fax has arrived at the right place. Consideration is taken over the location of printers, fax machines and copiers.

## **Working in partnership**

Working with other agencies is an integral part of good, pre-school practice and may involve telephone conversations with families and other professionals. When this is necessary, care is taken to ensure conversations are private and cannot be overheard.

## **Employees' information and data**

Confidential information and documents relating to employees e.g. clinical supervision, appraisal, personal information, complaints, grievances and competency are held securely.

- Employees' confidential files are securely locked away and are accessible only to the manager, deputy manager, and trustees.
- Individuals employed by the pre-school are able to access their own files but may not remove any material.
- Data kept electronically is password-protected and accessible only to authorised personnel.

All staff can normally expect that their personal details and health records will remain confidential unless:

- doing so endangers others

- there is a legal obligation to disclose such information
- despite the duty of confidentiality, the staff member's interest or the wider public interest justifies disclosure.

## **Levels of disclosure**

The key factor in deciding whether or not to disclose confidential information is proportionality i.e. the amount of confidential information disclosed and the number of people to whom it should be disclosed should be no more than necessary to meet the public interest in protecting the health and wellbeing of the individual or others.

## **Training**

The pre-school is committed to providing appropriate training, support and guidance on confidentiality and record-keeping for employees and trustees in order that they can carry out their respective duties, confidently and effectively. Confidentiality will be a key aspect for the induction of new staff.

## **Sharing of practice**

For the purpose of training, the sharing of case studies is only with full written consent from the subject of the study. Any references to a family are removed and a copy of all the information to be shared is provided for the family to check in advance of it being shared, and agreed.

Prior to the sharing of case studies the lead practitioner has the responsibility to remind participants of the need to declare interest if, during the process, it becomes clear the subject of the study is known to them. A decision will then be made as to whether it is appropriate for the participant to continue attending whilst the case is being shared and discussed.

## **Accountability**

On accepting employment at the pre-school, all employees are deemed to have read and understood the Confidentiality Policy. By accepting employment, they acknowledge that they fully agree to the policy's principles and that they understand that they are expected to treat all information acquired through their work at the pre-school, both formally and informally, in strict confidence and any breach of this policy will be subject to a disciplinary investigation.

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