

## Confidentiality Policy

This policy applies to PSC staff and volunteers.

PSC recognises that in the course of their duties both staff and volunteers may become aware of sensitive personal information about the parents/carers they are supporting, as well as other staff members and volunteers and their families, and will at times need to share that information to others within the Charity. PSC's Data Protection Policy sets out how the Charity collects, uses and stores personal information about service users as well as its own staff and volunteers. This Confidentiality Policy extends that guidance to how information is shared within the organisation in particular in the context of information which may be passed on verbally.

PSC recognises that the right of privacy is a basic human right. Accordingly, the Charity expects its staff, trustees and volunteers to respect the confidentiality of information about service users, as well as other staff, trustees and volunteers of the Charity and their families.

Confidential information is defined as verbal or written information which is not meant for public or general knowledge and which is regarded as personal.

Confidentiality is based on the need to protect the interests of the person to whose personal information those working or volunteering for PSC have access.

### Information sharing within the charity

PSC staff and volunteers may need to share information within the organisation in order to:

- Alert staff to a medical or mental health need of a service user, staff member of volunteer
- Put in place appropriate support for a service user, staff member of volunteer, or signpost to support
- Offer support to each other and opportunities for development by means of one-to-one or group supervision sessions

Information about service users is confidential to PSC, not to the individual staff member or volunteer. Nonetheless when confidential information is shared within the organisation individuals should be named only when there is a need to do so.

Information discussed about service users and their families within supervision sessions or other meetings should be treated as confidential by staff and volunteers of PSC.

Any discussion of service users and their families, e.g. 1:1 supervision, must not be done publicly - i.e. where it may be overheard.

### Information sharing with other agencies

PSC will only pass on any information to other individuals or agencies with the express permission of the parent/carer (excluding safeguarding concerns – see below).

## **Unauthorised Disclosure – where a person is at risk**

Wherever possible, consent of the service user should be sought before a referral is made to another agency, such as the Children’s Single Point of Access. However there are times when information may need to be disclosed by staff, volunteers or trustees of PSC without the consent of the service user.

If a PSC staff member or volunteer is concerned that a child or adult is at risk of being harmed they should seek advice from the CEO or Named Trustee for Safeguarding who will make the decision regarding disclosure of information outside of the charity. PSC safeguarding policy and procedure is set out in full in the PSC Safeguarding Policy.

The charity would disclose information *without consent* if it believed that:

- a. a child is at risk of being harmed
- b. a person’s life or safety is at risk

or:

- c. if required by statute (e.g. there is a legal obligation to report drug trafficking/money laundering/terrorist activity to the police)
- d. if required under a contractual obligation (e.g. where services are purchased by the local authority, etc, and that contract requires disclosure of certain information)
- e. if required by a court or court order.

A disclosure of confidential information without permission would be to the police, an authorised organisation (e.g. local authority) and to the courts.

## **Informing Service Users**

When supporting parent/carers, staff and volunteers of PSC must explain that what is discussed will be kept confidential to the Charity (apart from the situations requiring disclosure of information outside of the charity).

Written records of any contact with service users will be taken with their permission and the purpose of such records will be clearly explained to the parent/carer. Only essential information will be recorded, for monitoring and impact measurement purposes and to improve continuity of support provided. The records must then be stored as defined by PSC’s Data Protection Policy and PSC’s guidelines on ‘Safe use of IT systems and data storage’.

Phone calls to parents/carers must not be done publicly - i.e. where the phone call may be overheard.

## **Breach of this policy**

Any breach of this policy by a member of PSC staff would be a disciplinary matter and would be dealt with in accordance with the PSC disciplinary procedure.

In the case of a breach of this policy by a volunteer the matter would be dealt with by offering supervision and training to the volunteer or, where appropriate, ceasing the relationship between PSC and the volunteer, in accordance with the PSC Volunteer Policy.

## **Resources used to draw up this policy**

This Policy was drawn up with reference to PSC's Diagnosis Support Service Confidentiality Policy for Peer Supporters (now superseded).

## **Associated PSC documents and policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- PSC Data Protection Policy
- PSC Safeguarding Policy
- PSC Disciplinary Policy
- PSC Volunteer Policy
- PSC Safe Use of IT systems and Data Storage

## **Review of this policy**

This policy will be reviewed by the PSC board of trustees every two years.

This policy was adopted by the trustees in July 2016 and reviewed in April 2019

Review date: April 2021

Review date: January 2024