

RYEDALE CARERS SUPPORT

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1) Purpose

This policy explains RCS's approach to confidential information as it recognises that the nature of its work will inevitably involve employees and volunteers in the personal affairs of individuals or organisations.

In view of this RCS recognises that an individual or organisation has the right to expect that any information imparted by them to the organisation will be used only for the purpose for which it was given, will be accessible by them and should not be released to others without their consent.

RCS will throughout the nature of its work be involved in confidential information in relation to employees, volunteers, funders, customers, clients and other third parties. The purpose of this policy is to detail the basic standard to which employees, volunteers and trustees should adhere and which can be incorporated as part of normal working practices.

2) General Principles

- a) Information belongs to the person (or organisation) entrusting it to a member of RCS. It remains personal and in the control of the giver. Once received it may not be used for any purpose other than that for which it was given, nor may it be passed on to any person or organisation outside RCS without the express permission of the giver.
- b) Confidentiality can be breached in the event of physical, emotional or financial abuse.
- c) The policy aims to provide practical guidelines which will add credibility to the organisation and instil confidence in it.

3) Operational Practice

- a) RCS keeps records using paper files and a computer. Personal details of staff, volunteers and service users are kept in these systems.
- b) Any person who has records held by the organisation has a right to see those records and to change that information where it is inaccurate. In relation to staff this would be through the grievance procedure. A third party may have to be contacted about information they have provided.
- c) RCS will maintain an appropriate level of security, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and this policy will adequately protect

information about individuals that is held in the systems. Paper files will be kept in a locked area and computer files will be password protected.

- d) The use of information for reports, service development and funding applications will scrupulously avoid any specific detail about service users that might lead to their identification. The data provided by RCS should not include information that could easily lead to the identification of service users.
- e) Constructive liaison with other local agencies is sometimes essential if individuals and groups are to be offered an effective service by RCS. However, users of RCS services must have given their permission before any information that is held by the RCS can be passed on to a third party where that information specifically identifies them or might lead to their identification.
- f) RCS recognises that employees, volunteers, and trustees gain information about individuals and organisations during the course of their work or activities. In most cases such information will not be stated as confidential and they may have to exercise common sense and discretion in identifying whether information is expected to be kept confidential.
- g) Employees, volunteers and trustees should avoid exchanging personal information about individuals with whom they have a professional relationship and should avoid talking about organisations or individuals in social settings.
- h) If an employee is dissatisfied with the conduct or actions of other colleagues within the organisation then they should raise this with their line manager using the grievance procedure, if necessary, and not discuss their dissatisfaction outside of the organisation.

Employees/Volunteers accessing unauthorised files or breaching confidentiality may face disciplinary action. Ex-employees breaching confidentiality may face legal action.

4) Occasions when the policy might be broken

- a) RCS acknowledges that, on rare occasions, it may be necessary to break the basic rules of confidentiality. These may broadly be defined as situations where the safety, rights and liberties of other people or the person giving information may be seriously at risk. Also, legal reports may have to be made regardless of the consent of a service user. In such cases, staff should discuss the matter with the Chair of Trustees. Decisions that are made, and the reasons for them, must be properly recorded.
- b) There may be circumstances where employees, volunteers and trustees would benefit from discussing difficult situations with each other to gain a wider perspective on how to approach a problem. The organisation's consent must be sought before discussing the situation, unless it is felt that

the organisation would not object to this. Alternatively, a discussion may take place with names of identifying information remaining confidential.

- c) When confidential information is divulged without consent, except where it might result in more harm to other people, the individual concerned should be informed and an explanation of the action given.
- d) Where there is a legal duty on the organisation to disclose information, the person who is affected will be informed that disclosure has or will be made and where possible their permission will be obtained in advance.

5) Sharing information within RCS

- a) If it is desirable to share information with colleagues in order to give the best possible service to a user this is permissible providing it does not break an agreed confidence.
- b) If, at a meeting of staff/volunteers it is thought to be beneficial to discuss an individual case, the identity of the individual should not be divulged. Confidential matters must never be discussed outside the organisation even if no names are given – others may identify that individual.

6) Confidentiality within the User /Carers Family/Home

Confidential information given to a member of staff/volunteer by a service user/carer must not be shared with other members of the user/carers family or his/her friends without his/her permission.

7) Trustees of RCS and members of Sub Committees

Trustees of Ryedale Carers Support and Sub Committee members should normally regard information which they learn as members of a committee of RCS as confidential to themselves and to the Committee. If, however, as a result of their membership of the Committee, they become aware of information which they feel they cannot ignore as a member of a statutory or other body, they should bring this to the attention of the Committee so that the statutory or other implications can be formally acknowledged.

8) Disclosures

Please refer to our separate policy on Disclosure and Barring Service

9) Principles

Most information held by the organisation relates to individuals, partner organisations, service users, members, employees, trustees, and volunteers and information is kept to enable the organisation to understand their need.

Information about users may be kept for the purposes of monitoring in terms of equality and diversity and for reporting back to funders.

I have read and accept Ryedale Carers Support Confidentiality Policy and agree to abide by it.

Name

Signed

Date

Reviewed August 2022