

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Introduction

The guidelines in this document are set out to govern the sharing of confidential information between RCLC and an external organisation or individual.

The guidelines provide a framework to:

- enable the secure and confidential sharing of information to allow RCLC to meet the needs of its users.
- to inform individuals how information about them could be shared and how this sharing will be managed.

Definitions

1. RCLC recognises the right to privacy of the individual as a basic human right. We accept that personal details about an individual belong to that individual. Accordingly, we undertake to respect the confidentiality of certain information.
2. Confidential information is defined as verbal or written information, which is not meant for public or general knowledge, information which is regarded as personal by clients (individuals or organisations), members, trustees, staff or volunteers.
3. Confidentiality is based upon a reasoned concern for protecting the interests of the person to whose personal information RCLC has access. Working to confidentiality guidelines means that information may be disclosed only with consent and when necessary, and that discussion and consultation remains within these boundaries. Working in this way protects both the integrity of RCLC itself, and that of individual staff.

Policy

1. RCLC will follow the requirements of the Data Protection Act when dealing with personal data.
2. RCLC regards it as a duty of paid and unpaid staff and trustees not to reveal to any person or organisation outside RCLC, without the specific consent of the individual(s) or organisation(s) involved, any matter, which becomes known to them via their involvement with RCLC
3. RCLC would disclose information *without consent* if it believes 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 therefore be to the police, an authorised organisation (e.g. local authority) to the courts.

4. RCLC recognises that trustees, staff and volunteers may become aware of a wide range of information which they may need to share with others internally - for example: discussion of client issues during supervision, discussion of situations to gain experience from colleagues, etc. This kind of information sharing must not be done publicly - i.e. where it may be overheard, or where it may be discussed, and the general rule is that no individual or organisation should be named or otherwise identified except during individual supervision sessions if necessary. Only essential information should be recorded, and this should be done without identifying individuals.

5. Care should be taken when using the telephone, written records of calls which contain confidential information should be treated as in 5 above.

6. The sending or receiving of faxes which may contain personal information should only be undertaken if 'call back' where fax numbers can be validated before the fax is sent, is used.

7. Email communications may not be private and are not always secure, confidential data should not be included in emails.

8. Statistical information may be used for monitoring and funding purposes, but must not be attributable to an identified individual.

Procedures for Disclosure

There are three separate procedures depending upon the circumstances of disclosure which are set out below:

1. authorised disclosure
2. un-authorised disclosure - where a person is at risk
3. un-authorised disclosure - when required by statute, contractual obligation or the courts.

Authorised disclosure

If RCLC wishes to share data or information about an organisation or individual with other organisations or, an organisation wishes to have access to

confidential information consent must be sought from the individual(s) or organisation(s) to which the information pertains. Should the individual(s) or organisation(s) refuse consent; the information must not be disclosed. All requests for authorised disclosure must be agreed with the Centre Manager before a request for consent is made.

Un-authorised Disclosure - where a person is at risk

If a member of staff is concerned that an individual, a child or adult is at risk of being harmed then that member of staff should:

1. Seek advice from the Centre Manager, but if that is not possible then *call the police immediately*.
2. Record full details of the incident including times, people consulted and information given.
3. Report to the Centre Manager as soon as is possible.

Un-authorised Disclosure - when required by statute, contractual obligation or the courts.

1. All requests for information must be in writing to the Centre .
2. The information is required to support action covered by these guidelines or falls within exceptions within the Data Protection Act 1998.
3. A record setting out the request and grounds for disclosure is kept

In all of the above cases, if the Centre Manager is unavailable, the Chair of Trustees must be informed as soon as is possible.

Awareness

1. Regarding internal information, trustees, staff and volunteers are reminded that confidentiality extends to all issues relating to the internal affairs of RCLC: there may be times when confidential internal information is accessed - e.g. on finance, recruitment, planning, etc; such information should not be disclosed outside the organisation unless the procedures as set out in these guidelines are followed and authorisation is given.

2. All staff are required to follow these guidelines and other related RCLC policies, which will be kept available in the Centre's Policies Folder.

Date Approved by Board
Review Date
Signed on behalf of the
Board of Trustees

April.2013
April 2016

Dated
