



OFF THE RECORD

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Introduction

OFF THE RECORD is committed to maintaining high standards of confidentiality in all aspects of our work.

This policy applies to all OFF THE RECORD (OTR) members (employees, volunteers, managers, trustees and board representatives)

Confidentiality within the work of OTR is core to the support and trust, built up with clients. We believe that young people and families have the right to privacy and a confidential service. Seeking their consent to share confidential information, should always be the first option.

The use of information that OTR collects and processes will be used to provide a service, monitor and evaluate the service internally, and for external funders. Plus to carry out authorised monitoring of a client's journey and their clinical support.

We will work with clients to gain their informed consent to share any confidential information we have about them.

OFF THE RECORD will not sell, trade, rent or lend confidential information to anyone.

Objectives of the Policy

- To outline our commitment to confidentiality and to identify procedures to follow when thinking of sharing information and when protecting information
- To ensure that confidential records are properly managed

- To ensure that confidential information is only released in accordance with our Data Protection Policy, legislative considerations, BACP guidance and the guidelines of the organisation.
- To ensure that information is only disclosed with the informed consent of the person to whom the information relates, with the following exceptions:
 - when, by law, we must share information
 - when information is required by the police
 - when public safety is at risk
 - to safeguard a child or vulnerable adult.

Breach of confidentiality

OTR may have to breach confidentiality, in some circumstances and cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. We will only do this with careful consideration and in line with our policies, legal requirements, BACP framework and will make every effort to inform and discuss the concerns with the person involved.

There may be occasions when there is a perceived conflict between the professional and moral duty of confidentiality, and the need to disclose information that is considered to be in the public interest e.g. terrorism, or individual protection.

When action to breach confidentiality is considered or taken, a written record will be made outlining the key events, relevant facts and any decisions made. Deliberate breaches of confidentiality for reasons other than risk management, are a serious matter and will be dealt with under relevant OTR's Professional Boundaries and Conduct policy.

Implementation of the policy

1. Confidentiality statements outlining our policy to young people will be clearly displayed throughout the service.
2. The policy will be discussed with young people using language that they understand at the introduction session and on returning visits as appropriate e.g. first counselling, groupwork session or at any other time where a confidentiality issue may arise, or the client enquires about confidentiality.
3. Supervision should be used to explore concerns regarding confidentiality and guidance taken from the Supervisor in the first instance. Further guidance may also be sought from OTR's Clinical Lead.

4. OTR's Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies are not a barrier to sharing information but provide a framework to ensure that personal information is shared in a considered manner and for an appropriate reason.
5. We will be open and honest with clients (and their family/carers where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared.
6. We will seek the client's agreement to share information, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
7. We will keep a record of decisions and the reasons to share information or not. If it is decided to share, then we will record what is shared, with whom and for what purpose.
8. We will ensure messages left within the service are done so in a safe and confidential manner, such as by putting the message in an envelope in a designated space or sent via email.
9. We will ensure clients' notes, referral letters and client work are stored in a lockable cabinet.
10. We will use client OTR number where possible to ensure confidentiality and privacy
11. Any safeguarding concerns are managed and monitored by a secure online system (see OTR's Safeguarding Policy).
12. All information gained about clients directly or indirectly will stay within the service and not be shared outside of the service in any manner except for the aforementioned exceptions.

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN APPROVED AND AUTHORISED BY THE TRUSTEES OF OFF THE RECORD

Date Reviewed and Re-Adopted: 29th July 2024

Expected Review Date: July 2026