



Recording and Confidentiality **Service Users**

During the course of their work, directors, employees, volunteers and students will have access to personal information relating to others. It is important to respect the right to confidentiality of staff and service users by having clear guidelines on how this information will be stored, when and with whom it may be shared and for how long it will be retained.

Information about service users and carers

All information about service users and carers should be treated according to the following underpinning principles:

- Information is held in order to promote the best interests of the individual or family to whom it pertains.
- All personal information is fundamentally the property of that individual.
- In some families different members will have differing needs and wishes and this should be borne in mind and any difficulties discussed with senior worker or practice teacher.
- Individuals should have open access to any information held on them except where there is an overriding concern for the safety or welfare of children or vulnerable adults.
- Other agencies should be made aware of this policy.
- Service users and carers should be aware of information held on them and participate in creating it. Consent to the appropriate use of information should be obtained from both adults and children where age appropriate.
- Information held within MCFB is confidential within the agency and should be accessed by agency staff and students on a 'need to know' basis.
- All staff and students should be mindful of the need for confidentiality at all times and the importance of ensuring that discussions or phone conversations about confidential matters cannot be overheard.

- Effective services will often be best provided in partnership with other agencies. Information should be shared with other agencies with the consent of the individual, who should sign agreement or otherwise at the point of initial assessment.
- Should concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult indicate sharing of information beyond that to which the service user consents, this should be done in accordance with MCFB's Child Protection Policy and the service user should be informed.
- Files should be destroyed five years after the last contact unless contact was only to give advice and was not extensive, in which case it should be destroyed one year after last contact. When a decision is taken by a senior worker to close a file then a destroy date should be recorded. In exceptional circumstances, for instance when a young person may wish to have access to information at a later date, consideration should be given to whether a file should be retained for longer or whether it should be combined e.g. with local authority main file. When decisions are complex they should be discussed at the Early Years meeting or the Service and Learning Managers meeting.
- These principles apply to written and electronic information.

Guidelines to best practice in recording information about service users and their carers

- All written information will be stored in the central family filing cabinets which will be locked overnight. Information should only be taken out of the MCFB office in exceptional circumstances and with the consent of practice teacher or senior worker.
- Electronic information will be stored in the MCFB database.
- Any other material, such as art work, DVDs etc, should be located with the file to ensure open access.
- Students must ensure that any other electronic information, e.g. draft reports, is deleted at the end of placement. Attention must be paid to all forms of electronic information such as mobile phone records.
- Students and Practice Teachers need to give details of their work with families and individuals for education purposes in order to evidence that students have reached the required standard. Any details given should be anonymised.
- For every child worked with, a consent form must be completed
- Useful guidance to high quality recording can be found on the website www.writeenough.org.uk
- All recording should be purposeful and consideration be given, for instance, to what needs to be recorded in order to help future work,

inform future workers or give service users information about decision-making.

- All recording should state legibly who the author is and be dated.
- When MCFB works with various members of a family then consideration should be given to whether separate files should be opened or separate parts included in a family file.
- It may be useful to include a chronology detailing important events in the service user's life and a genogram to allow ready understanding of family makeup and relationships.
- Files or electronic records should contain a list of involved agencies with named professionals and contact details.
- Any uncertainty about recording should be discussed with practice teacher or senior worker.
- Future needs assessments should give detail of activities and work undertaken in order to inform a future worker or student and avoid repetition.

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