

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1. The Policy

Confidentiality is important in order to maintain the integrity of and trust in the organisation. Healthwatch Brighton and Hove offers confidentiality to all volunteers, staff, members of the Governing Body and users of its services. No confidential information regarding any of these people will be disclosed without the express permission of those involved. All staff, volunteers and members of the Governing Body are strictly bound by this policy.

2. Confidentiality sharers

- 2.1 The only automatic confidentiality sharers are members of Healthwatch Brighton and Hove staff. This always includes a person's supervisor, with the proviso that supervision itself is a confidential arena. Other than this, confidentiality can only be shared with those who need to know in any particular instance, and section 3 below always applies.
- 2.2 Staff, volunteers and members of the Governing Body should not engage in discussion or the divulging of confidential information outside of work. Any such exchange of information should only take place in supervision or discussion with confidentiality sharers in confidence. "Outside of work" includes partners, family members and close friends.

3. Breaches of confidentiality

- 3.1 In common with the general population, staff and volunteers have a legal duty to report evidence of suspected child abuse and a small number of other crimes, and may do so without seeking permission. They may also be required to disclose information given in confidence if called to be a witness in court.
- 3.2 Notwithstanding section 3.1 above, if confidentiality has to be breached, the person concerned will be told, and their express permission sought, where possible and appropriate. "Express" means that the permission must be clearly given verbally, in writing, or using another form of communication accessible by the person concerned.
- 3.3 Volunteers must not breach confidentiality themselves except in an emergency situation. They should instead bring the matter to the attention of their line manager at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.4 Inappropriate or unauthorised breaches of confidentiality are a disciplinary

matter, and will be dealt with using the Community Works *Disciplinary Policy* or the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove *Procedure for the Management of Volunteer Conduct and Capability*.

4. Accessibility of Policy

All staff, volunteers and members of the Governing Body will be given a copy of this Policy during their induction period. Members of the public will be given a copy on request.

5. Confidentiality of records

5.1 Storage

All confidential records will be kept securely. Paper records will be kept in lockable (and locked), non-portable storage units. Electronic records will be password protected.

5.2 Access

Access to confidential records is restricted to confidentiality sharers. Records concerning individuals are available to those individuals on request.

5.3 Usage

Confidential information is used only for the purpose for which it was collected.

5.4 Retention

Information is kept only for as long as is necessary to serve the purpose for which it was collected. This will vary according to the type of information, and the exact length of time is specified in the relevant Community Works and Healthwatch Brighton and Hove policies.

6. Other organisations

Notwithstanding all of the above, staff, volunteers and members of the Governing Body are also obliged to comply with the confidentiality policy of any organisation in or with which they are working as part of their duties with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.