

## *Someone Cares* ***Information Security Policy***

**The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we have clear management directions on responsibilities and procedures in order to safeguard personal data.**

We comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and follow the eight Data Protection Principles, which require that data shall be:

1. Fairly and lawfully processed
2. Processed for limited purposes
3. Adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. Accurate
5. Not kept longer than necessary
6. Processed in accordance with the data subjects' rights
7. Secure
8. Not transferred to countries outside the EEA without adequate protection.

### **Record Keeping and Data Protection**

General statistics are kept about the numbers of people attending. These statistics do not contain information from which an individual can be identified and are solely used to monitor and improve effectiveness.

Counselling notes may record background information and key issues worked on in the session. These will vary in length and detail. Any concerns are also noted. Counselling notes are not kept with client notes.

Counsellors only have access to their own client case notes. Administration staff do NOT have access to any case notes.

### **Client Records**

Contents of Counselling Records:

- The original written and signed contract (if applicable)
- All appointments including non-attendance
- Up to date record of content and process of sessions with client
- Record of supervision sessions
- Copies of any referral to any one else about the client.

### **Security of Records**

Client records will be kept in a split system and the two parts of the records will be kept separately:

- The first section contains useful background information about the client together with a copy of the written contract and any correspondence. It will

also include any third party information eg. GP letter. This will be transferred onto the Someone Cares database. All completed referral forms will be placed in a file wallet (colour) with identifying client number clearly marked on exterior and kept in a locked filing cabinet clearly marked confidential

- The second section is the record of the actual counselling sessions. It will contain the code number and cannot easily be linked to identifiable people. **This will be kept in separate locked cabinet marked Counsellors only, confidential. Each counsellor will have a separate file.**
- Endings: Client records will be placed in a sealed envelope with the date by which they may be destroyed, an identifying number and the counsellor initials. They will be retained for 5 years.

### **Access by Clients**

The Data Protection Act 1998 extends the established rights of client access from computer records to both computer and manual files. Other laws relating to this are:

Adoption Act 1976

Access to Health Records Act 1990

Data Protection Act 1984

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Human Rights Act 1998

Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, clients have a right of access to all notes kept on them. It will be important not just to show the notes to the client, but for the counsellor to talk to them about what their file contains and why. Some notes could be in shorthand and may need explaining.

If the client's file includes a letter or additional information from for example their general practitioner, then consent must be obtained before the correspondence can be seen.

If the client wishes to see their file, they should ask their counsellor, giving two weeks notice.

### **Liaison and Correspondence**

With the permission of the client, it may be appropriate for the counsellor to liaise with or write to a third party – for example a general practitioner or social worker. In the case of telephone calls, the purpose of the call, and the nature and extent of the information to be given, will be agreed with the client prior to the call. In the case of letters, clients will agree the contents of the letter.

## **Supervision**

In line with their professional requirements, counsellors may discuss counselling sessions with a supervisor. The purpose of supervision is to help the counsellor reflect on their work with clients.

## **Security**

All notes and records are kept securely locked. Because they may contain sensitive personal information, counselling case notes are filed anonymously and contain no reference to clients' names.

## **Risks**

Information comes in all forms, written, computer data, printed data, and conversations. Methods of storage are paper files, memory, and computers. Sharing information can be by post, data networks, voice (telephone, conversation), fax.

Misuse of computers, including hacking, cracking, accounting fraud, telephone fraud, electronic vandalism, theft of equipment, disclosure of sensitive information, theft of information,

Internet exposes a risk in that networks can be accessed improperly, data can be corrupted, and viruses can be introduced.

We can only stop inadvertent use and human error.

The following legislation has a bearing on information security

The Data Protection Act (1998)  
Copyright Designs and Patents Act (1988)  
The computer Misuse Act (1990)  
The Companies Act  
The Defamation Act  
The Criminal Justices Act

## **Computer Protection**

At present we are developing a database and once it is up and running we will choose one of two ways to store it:

- it will be kept on a stand alone PC used for that purpose only
- it will be kept on disc which will be removed every day and stored in a secure location.

This is as far as I have got. I still need to cover passwords, emails, access by volunteers etc. Until we are up and running I don't know the answers.