

Confidentiality Policy and Procedures.

1. Confidentiality Statement.

Suffolk Rape Crisis offers a confidential service, details of which are to be found in the 'Confidentiality Policy and Procedures' document and which will be discussed with individual service users. Copies of the full document are available on request.

This statement will be displayed in the offices of Suffolk Rape Crisis.

A summary of this policy will be on the Suffolk Rape Crisis website.

2. Levels of Confidentiality.

The confidentiality that clients can expect will vary slightly depending on their relationship with the organisation. In general, all service users can expect that any information they disclose will be confidential within Suffolk Rape Crisis. No information relating to any service user will be discussed with anyone outside of Suffolk Rape Crisis without the express consent of the client (see section 5) or unless Suffolk Rape Crisis is bound to disclose information by law (see section 7).

The level of confidentiality that a client can expect will be explained to them at the outset of their relationship with Suffolk Rape Crisis and again if the relationship changes. For face to face work, the client will be required to sign the relevant document acknowledging that they have read, discussed and understood the level of confidentiality that they can expect.

Staff and volunteers will not accept any information from a client on the condition that it cannot be shared with any other Suffolk Rape Crisis personnel.

The following paragraphs provide a more detailed breakdown of the various possible relationships:

Counselling, Emotional Support & Advocacy – counsellors working on this basis with clients will have access to a supervisor, who is external to Suffolk Rape Crisis but bound by our confidentiality policy. On occasion, support may be sought from volunteers or staff during the course of volunteers' meetings, although this should be of a general nature and should rarely involve a need to disclose any details.

Work with Paid Staff Members – clients receiving support from any of the paid staff members as part of their employment can expect their details to be confidential within the staff structure. Details of these interactions will not be disclosed to volunteers, even if they are receiving counselling from a volunteer. If a crisis occurs the staff member concerned may ask the client for permission to contact the counsellor to discuss the situation. Staff members will have access to a supervisor, who will be external to the organisation but bound by our confidentiality policy.

Clients Calling in to the Suffolk Rape Crisis Office – Suffolk Rape Crisis actively discourages clients from calling in to the office without an appointment. However, should such a situation arise the client cannot expect knowledge of her visit, or any details she discloses in the presence of others to be kept confidential. If a client

needs to discuss a confidential matter she should be made aware of the appropriate channels.

3. Statistical Recording

Suffolk Rape Crisis is committed to effective statistical recording of clients to enable us to monitor take-up of service, to support funding applications, and to identify trends.

It is the responsibility of all counsellors to ensure that all statistical records are produced in anonymous form so that individuals cannot be identified.

4. Case Records

Personal information given by clients will only be recorded in nominal form, with anonymity guaranteed by our use of reference numbers. New staff and volunteers will learn how to use this system as part of their training. The lack of identification on written records is particularly important as the need for all workers to access call sheets means that they have to be stored in the office. Personal details of clients receiving support from paid members of staff will be recorded on case records but these will be kept locked within the office when not in the sole care of the employee concerned. Any contact details given by clients receiving counselling from volunteer counsellors will be recorded on the appropriate case record and be kept locked in the Suffolk Rape Crisis office except when in the care of the counsellor/s.

All client records will be stored in such a way that they are only available to those members of the organisation who work directly with clients, and not with members of the Trustee Board or other parties.

Names and addresses of telephone callers will not be stored once they have been used (for example, to send information) unless the service user requests it.

It is the responsibility of all counsellors to ensure that all case records are stored away in locked filing cabinets. All records must be locked away at the end of each working day or counselling session. Any rough notes with information relating to clients will be shredded before the end of the day/session.

Case records should be completed within the Suffolk Rape Crisis offices whenever possible. They must not be anywhere where it is possible for them to be seen by anyone other than the client or designated Suffolk Rape Crisis personnel.

5. Expressed Consent to give Information

Each member of Suffolk Rape Crisis is responsible for obtaining signed agreement from clients if they feel it is necessary to consult a third party on the client's behalf. In the case of telephone counselling it is likely that only verbal consent can be given but, where possible, another member of the organisation should be made aware of the agreement before any action is taken. The client should be told that another person knows that agreement for action to be taken on their behalf has been given. The consent must also be recorded on the case sheet.

Where necessary, staff and volunteers are responsible for checking with clients whether it is acceptable to call them (or write) at home or work. If a message is left or the call is taken by someone other than the user, no direct mention should be

made of Suffolk Rape Crisis unless the client has previously indicated that this is acceptable. This consent must be recorded on the case sheet.

6. Breaches of Confidentiality

The only circumstances in which a breach of confidentiality will be justified are when:

- a. Maintaining adult confidentiality disregards the welfare of a child or puts the child at risk of harm in accordance with the **Safeguarding Children Guidelines for Child Protection in Suffolk**.
- b. Not to do so would be breaking the law (see section 7).

If the confidentiality of a client is to be breached the Chair of the Trustee Board should be informed of the situation and the reasons behind the proposed breach. Efforts should be made to ensure that this is done without divulging any more information than is absolutely necessary.

7. Protecting staff and volunteers of Suffolk Rape Crisis

Personal details of Suffolk Rape Crisis members are not to be divulged to clients under any circumstances, and only to outside agencies with the consent of the individual concerned.

8. Legislative Framework

Suffolk Rape Crisis will monitor this policy annually to ensure it meets statutory and legal requirements including the Data Protection Act, Children's Act, Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, and Prevention of Terrorism Act. Training on the policy will include these aspects.

9. Ensuring the effectiveness of the policy

The Confidentiality policy will be held in the offices of Suffolk Rape Crisis and will be available for anyone to view by request to the Manager. Existing and new staff and volunteers will be made aware of the policy via induction and training. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Manager and a designated member of the Trustee Board. Any amendments needed will be circulated to all members of the organisation before being agreed and included.

All members of Suffolk Rape Crisis will respect the privacy of service users by adhering to this policy.