



Helping Blind and Disabled People

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Registered Charity No. 1013965

Confidentiality Policy

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers of Milton Keynes Reader Service. The data covered by the confidentiality policy includes:

- information about the organisation, for example, its plans or finances,
- information about other organisations, and
- information about individuals, for example service users, volunteers and staff,

recorded electronically, in paper form or by word of mouth.

All staff, volunteers and others who work for Milton Keynes Reader Service must respect the need for confidentiality of information held about anyone who comes into contact with the charity, and about any charity business. This is expected to continue even when contact has ceased with this person, and when the volunteer or member of staff no longer works for Milton Keynes Reader Service.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Milton Keynes Reader Service's Data Protection Policy.

1. Information about individuals

Milton Keynes Reader Service is committed to ensuring confidential services to all individuals. The confidentiality is between the individual and the organisation, not the members of staff delivering a particular service.

Confidential information will not be sought from a service user unless expressly in the interests of that person, i.e. to enable a better service delivery.

Information will only be passed to another agency or to other individuals outside of the charity with the consent of the service user; where possible this will be with written consent.

Where a member of staff or volunteer intends to obtain information from another agency to help the service user or to refer them to another agency this must be explained to the service user and their permission given.

No personal information about staff, volunteers or service users will be given to any third party including a member of their family, without the consent of the service user.

Information will only be divulged on a "need to know" basis.

Information will be treated in confidence and will not be divulged to anyone outside the organisation except where extenuating circumstances exist (see below). However, in order that we can provide the best possible help to our service users it may be necessary to share information with a manager or colleagues within Milton Keynes Reader Service.

All service users are entitled to privacy and will be made aware that they can specifically request to be seen in private.

Under no circumstance should details of a service user be discussed with anyone outside of the organisation or in an open plan area in such a manner that it is possible to identify that person.

Members of staff and volunteers should take due care and attention when speaking to service users and using the telephone. Service users should not be able to hear a conversation or personal details of another service user.

2. Use of service user/volunteer information for publicity, reporting or training purposes

Milton Keynes Reader Service does need to be able to provide information where appropriate about the impact of our services.

Where one of our services has an outcome which would provide useful material for publicity, reporting or training purposes, service user and/or volunteer's permission will be sought, wherever possible and in writing, before any detail is released to anybody. Where permission cannot be obtained, any detail that would enable identification of the person(s) involved will be changed.

3. Limits to service user confidentiality

In certain circumstances Milton Keynes Reader Service reserves the right to break confidentiality should this be deemed necessary. These circumstances include:

- where a member of staff believes that a service user

could cause danger to themselves or to others,

- where a member of staff suspects abuse or has knowledge of abuse,
- where the service user gives information which indicates that a crime has been committed,
- where disclosure is required by law, for example, by the police,
- where the service user gives information which indicates a possible terrorist threat,
- where a person is felt to lack the mental capacity to make the decision. In such case, the member of staff or volunteer will discuss with a manager and they will only act in the service user's best interest.

The decision to break confidentiality will be decided on a case by case basis and always in conjunction with a manager.

4. Access to data

This Policy operates on a "need to know" basis. Other than members of staff and volunteers in the office of Milton Keynes Reader Service, no person will have access to service user or organisational information unless it is relevant to the service or their work.

Service users and volunteers have the right to request access to all information stored about them, and have a right to see a copy of this confidentiality policy on request.

Where any party concerned has a sensory or physical impairment, efforts should be made to ensure that all aspects of this policy and exchanges between parties are understood.

Significant breaches of this policy will be handled under Milton Keynes Reader Service's disciplinary procedures.

5. Evaluation and monitoring

All staff and volunteers will be given a copy of the policy when they join Milton Keynes Reader Service and will sign the confidentiality statement that they will abide by this policy.

Milton Keynes Reader Service will ensure that all staff and volunteers are trained in the application of this policy.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Chairperson of the management committee and approved by the management committee. The policy will also be reviewed in response to changes in relevant legislation, contractual arrangements, good practice or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.

Confidentiality Statement

for staff and volunteers

When working for Milton Keynes Reader Service, you will often need to have access to confidential information which may include, for example:

- Personal information about individuals who are service users or otherwise involved in the activities organised by Milton Keynes Reader Service.
- Information about the internal business of Milton Keynes Reader Service.
- Personal information about staff or volunteers working for Milton Keynes Reader Service.

Milton Keynes Reader Service is committed to keeping this information confidential in order to protect people and Milton Keynes Reader Service itself. 'Confidential' means that all access to information must be on a "need to know" basis and a properly authorised basis.

You must use only the information you have been authorised to use, and for purposes that have been authorised. You should also be aware that under the Data Protection Act, unauthorised access to data about individuals is a criminal offence.

You must assume that information is confidential unless you know that it is intended by Milton Keynes Reader Service to be made public. You must also be particularly careful not to disclose confidential information to unauthorised people or cause a breach of security.

In particular you must:

- not compromise or seek to evade security measures (including computer passwords),
- be particularly careful when sending information to other agencies and organisations,
- not gossip about confidential information, either with colleagues or people outside Milton Keynes Reader Service, and
- not disclose information - especially over the telephone - unless you are sure that you know who you are disclosing it to, and that they are authorised to have it.

If you are in doubt about whether to disclose information or not, do not guess. Withhold the information while you check with an appropriate person whether the disclosure is appropriate.

Your confidentiality obligations continue to apply indefinitely after you have stopped working or volunteering for Milton Keynes Reader Service.

I have read and understand the above statement and the Confidentiality Policy. I accept my responsibilities regarding confidentiality.

Signed:

Date: