

AGE UK EXETER

Controlled Document

Document Name: Confidentiality Policy

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Review Schedule: Every three years

Next review due: June 2027

Owner (Responsibility): CEO

Pass amendments to: Governance Officer

Revision History: See end of document.

Document Location: www.ageuk.org.uk/exeter/about-us/policiesandguidelines

Document Description

Age UK Exeter (AUKE) is committed to treating all information with respect, maintaining the confidentiality of clients, employees, and volunteers; and maintaining high standards of confidentiality in all aspects of its work. This policy sets out how the charity will achieve this.

Implementation & Quality Assurance

Implementation is immediate and this policy shall stay in force until any alterations are formally agreed.

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Board of Trustees, sooner if legislation, best practice, or other circumstances indicate this is necessary.

All aspects of this Policy shall be open to review at any time. If you have any comments or suggestions on the content of this policy please contact the CEO on, info@ageukexeter.org.uk or at Age UK Exeter, The Sycamores, Mount pleasant Road, Exeter, EX4 7AE, 01392 202092.

Confidentiality Policy

1. Introduction

AUKE is committed to treating all information with respect, maintaining the confidentiality of clients, employees, and volunteers; and maintaining high standards of confidentiality in all aspects of its work. This policy sets out how we will achieve this. All employees and volunteers are expected to abide by this policy. Clients will have access to the relevant aspects of this policy through the client privacy statement.

Breaches of confidentiality may jeopardise the wellbeing of staff, volunteers and clients and consequently could be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

2. Aim

- To protect the interests of our clients, staff, and volunteers.
- To ensure all clients have trust and confidence in AUKE and that their dignity is respected.
- To comply with relevant data protection and safeguarding legislation.
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers understand and carry out their duties to safeguard a clients' rights to confidentiality by avoiding wrongful disclosure of information entrusted to AUKE.
- To ensure that staff and volunteers understand that their knowledge about internal affairs or the financial status of AUKE is confidential.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles and guidelines on maintaining confidentiality and the circumstances and procedures where breaking confidentiality may be necessary.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all trustees, employees and volunteers of AUKE and should be read in conjunction with the following AUKE policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Mental Capacity Act Policy
- IT and Communication Systems Policy.

5. Definitions

Confidentiality means protecting personal information which is not in the public domain, and which relates to AUKE clients, staff or volunteers and the affairs of AUKE.

Personal information relates to any information, whether written or spoken, which makes an individual identifiable.

Personal data is any recorded information that relates to a living individual who can be identified from that information, which is processed (including collecting, storing, amending, or disclosing or destroying).

6. Principles and Practical Aspects

- All personal information must be treated as confidential, and all reasonable steps must be taken to keep personal information secure.
- Personal information, wherever appropriate, should be anonymised by removing as many identifiers as possible, for example by only using CLOG numbers and/or a person's initials.
- Make sure any confidential discussions take place in an appropriate place.
- If confidential documents are shared in-house, brown envelopes should be used or the documents placed directly in the other staff members' hands.
- Do not talk about clients or discuss personal information about a service user with another service user.
- Do not discuss personal information about staff or volunteers with a client.
- Always use respectful and non-judgmental language in all communications (including emails and notebooks).
- Any enquirer's approach is to AUKE rather than to an individual member of staff or volunteer. Discussion of information with another member of staff or volunteer of AUKE, who may be able to help with the query, does not breach confidentiality.
- Access to rooms and offices must be controlled. Visitors must be met at reception and offered a seat as the member of staff or volunteer they are meeting is informed of their arrival.
- All staff should clear their desks at the end of each day and confidential information stored in a lockable drawer or filing cabinet or shredded.
- Passwords must be kept secure and must not be disclosed to unauthorised persons. Staff and, where appropriate, volunteers must ensure computer/laptop screens are locked if they are away from their desk.
- Documents must be password protected if they contain confidential information when emailing outside of AUKE.
- Staff must not forward any confidential information via email to their personal e-mail account. Staff must not store confidential information on a privately-owned computer or device.
- Staff and volunteers must ensure that confidential information is kept secure and confidential when working away from the office or at home.
- Confidential information must be kept secure at all times when travelling between work, home and site visits and where practically possible should be kept on your person.

7. When to break Client Confidentiality

Please refer to AUKE's Safeguarding and Mental Capacity Act Policies.

Client confidentiality is held in the highest regard and all steps must be taken to preserve it. However, occasionally when safeguarding concerns are raised, confidentiality may have to be broken and/or consent may not be given. These circumstances include:

- Where other people are, or may be, at risk, including children.

- Where the client lacks the mental capacity to make a decision about the nature of the concern and/or whether to report it (see AUKE Mental Capacity Act Policy).
- The implication of a professional who has access to other vulnerable adults. If a professional is implicated in perpetrating or condoning the safeguarding concern, then the concern has to be raised with the Local Authority, no matter what the client requests, because the professional may have access to other vulnerable adults.
- Where a serious crime has possibly been committed or could be prevented by reporting the concern; in these instances, the concern has to be reported to the Local Authority and the Police. It is beyond the scope of this policy to define 'serious crime', therefore consideration of the extent of harm should inform decisions about disclosure. Likely definitions of serious crime include, but are not limited to:
 - cases where the individual(s) may suffer or have suffered serious harm,
 - threat to security of the state or public order,
 - actions which result(ed) in significant financial gain or loss.
- In some instances, AUKE staff may not inform the client that they are going to report the concern in order to protect safety and preserve evidence, for instance in some domestic abuse situations.
- Where the alleged abuser has their own care and support needs and may also be at risk.
- Where the client may be under duress or being coerced.
- Where a court order or other legal authority has requested the information.

8. Confidentiality and AUKE Business Operations

Staff and volunteers should not use or disclose to any person, either during or at any time after their employment or volunteer role with AUKE, any confidential information about the business or affairs of AUKE or any of its business contacts, or about any other matters which may come to their knowledge in the course of their employment.

9. Breaches of Confidentiality

Staff or volunteers should notify any potential breach, or risk of breach, to their line manager or a member of the senior management team without delay; so that steps can be taken to remedy the situation.

Breaches of confidentiality may be dealt with through the charity's staff and volunteer disciplinary procedures if appropriate and depending on the nature and severity of the breach.

Revision History

Revision date	Summary of Changes	Other Comments
26.6.15	Routine review by Standards Committee	
14.7.15	Approved by Board of Trustees	Next review due June 2017
4.9.17	Routine Review by Standards Committee	Recommended to the Board for approval
12.9.17	Approved by Board of Trustees	Next review due September 2017
8.1.18	Reviewed to check conformity with CQS. Final bullet point added.	Recommended to the Board for approval.
9.1.18	Approved by Board of Trustees	Next review due January 2020
6.1.20	Reviewed by the Standards Committee. Extensively amended to reflect confidentiality across the whole organization and not just for service users data	Recommended to the Board for approval
14.1.20	Reviewed and approved by board of Trustees	Next review due January 2022
26.04.21	Amendments made for change of services and relocation	
19.04.24	Reformatted based on AUK Bristol model as it was deemed to be more comprehensive and to cover pertinent points.	Approved 25.06.24