



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The right to privacy is essential to ensure that the older person, volunteer or employee has trust and confidence in the organisation and is treated with respect and dignity.

Age UK Barnet recognises that the principle of confidentiality should extend to any information about the internal affairs of the organisation and should be adhered to by trustees, staff and volunteers.

Any older person, volunteer or employee has the right to expect that any information imparted by them will be used for the purpose for which it was given and should not be released to any other, inside or outside the organisation, without their consent.

The aim of this statement is to create and maintain an environment where personal dignity and individual rights are respected.

- The confidentiality policy will apply to all personnel records for staff and volunteers including information obtained through recruitment procedures.
- Age UK Barnet will need to keep written records of users. This information will be kept in locked filing cabinets and accessed only by the appropriate service manager or approved staff.
- Permission should be sought to collect this information and the user should be informed of their right of access to it. Information should only be collected when it is necessary for a specific purpose.
- Information/records will be stored securely, observing the provisions of the Data Protection Act, if on computer. If confidential information is to be disposed of, it should be shredded or otherwise physically destroyed, so that other parties cannot read it.
- If information is to be divulged to a third party, consent should be obtained from the user. Where a person is felt to lack the mental capacity to make a decision about divulging details of a particular issue to a third party/agency the worker may use 'implied consent'. This will only follow after discussion with and agreement of the service manager. The incident must be recorded and stored securely.
- In certain circumstances such as 'life and limb' situations it may be necessary/appropriate to divulge information and so breach confidentiality. In such an emergency prior permission is not necessary, but the line manager and chief

officer must be informed as soon as possible after the incident and, if appropriate the Chair and/or the trustees.

- All older people, volunteers and staff should be aware of the confidentiality policy and of their right to complain if information is divulged without their permission. The complaint should follow the procedure set out in the Complaints Policy.
- The importance of confidentiality and the constraints it implies will become part of the staff and volunteers training programme.
- Breach of confidence is likely to result in disciplinary action, which may involve dismissal. Trustees, staff and volunteers should also be aware that, regardless of any action taken by Age UK Barnet, a breach of confidence could result in a civil action for damages under the Data Protection Act 1998.