

## Confidentiality Policy

OCD Action takes client confidentiality extremely seriously and this policy applies to all employees and volunteers of OCD Action.

**Confidentiality exists between the service user or caller and the organisation not between the user of the service and the member of staff or volunteer.**

**Any information a caller or user of OCD Action's services discloses must not be shared with a third party without the direct consent of the caller or service user. This includes the sharing of information with other family members. Exceptions to this are listed in this policy.**

**Volunteer Advocates** must ensure that any information given to them by a third party is disclosed to the client; Advocates cannot 'gate keep' information from their clients. **Before health care or other professionals share information with you, they must be advised of this protocol.**

**Helpline** calls are not recorded but may be listened in to. This is for training purposes and so that the quality and consistency of the service being provided can be assessed.

### **Occasions when confidentiality can be breached:**

- If a caller/service user is in a life-threatening situation or is likely to suffer significant harm if an intervention is not made on their behalf (see risk assessment guidelines for further clarification of this).
- If the caller/service user is abusing or threatening to abuse someone else physically or sexually (including neglect). Because of the nature of the 'intrusive thoughts' element to OCD, disclosures around fears of harming others should be treated sensitively.
- If a terrorist threat is made, or specific information in relation to terrorism is disclosed.
- If the police present a Witness Order or Search Order.
- If there is a specific threat to the service or those providing it. Examples include (but are not limited to): if a caller threatens a Helpline volunteer and it is believed they will carry out that threat; if a caller/service user or anyone else deliberately interrupts or causes a problem with the Helpline service's telephony.

## **Risk Assessment**

OCD Action frequently receives callers that present as having recurring thoughts that relate to abusing someone else. At the risk assessment stage, it is therefore vital to establish whether these thoughts have or have not been acted upon. Just as important is whether they are likely to be acted upon. These calls should be handled very carefully as, whilst it is necessary to know whether anyone else is at risk, the caller is likely to be very distressed at having such intrusive thoughts, and worried about confidentiality / not being believed.

A **risk assessment** should be carried out which should include:

- Immediacy of the situation
- Age of caller/service user
- Whether anyone else knows about the situation
- What has actually happened / is happening
- How the caller/service user is feeling physically / emotionally
- Where the caller/service user is

If a volunteer or a member of staff feels that confidentiality might need to be breached, they should discuss their concerns with the Service Manager or the Director. The final decision to breach confidentiality will be taken by the Director.

The Service Manager/Director will decide what action needs to be taken and where they believe that a vulnerable adult or a person under 18 is at risk of either physical or emotional harm then any action will comply with OCD Action's Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy.

Once the immediate situation has been dealt with, the breach of confidentiality should be written up, the volunteer/member of staff debriefed, and chain of events reviewed to ensure protocol was followed.

05/19

Review Date: 05/20