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DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy outlines Richmond Mind's approach on access to information held by the organisation.
- 1.2 The policy sets out the framework in which the organisation balances openness to information for all its stakeholders whilst protecting confidentiality for staff, service users, and its own business interests.
- 1.3 All staff, Committee Members and volunteers are expected to read and understand the policy and to ensure that they comply with it.

2.0 CONFIDENTIALITY – Service Users

- 2.1 All information contained on client records is regarded as confidential between the organisation and the user and will be kept in locked filing cabinets / drawers.
- 2.2 It should be made clear to service users that confidential information provided by them to one member of staff may be made available to other staff who *need to know* that information to carry out their duties.
- 2.3 Information could also be shared to management in supervising the delivery of services.
- 2.4 In most circumstances information should only be given to other agencies with the service users permission.
- 2.5 Where Richmond Mind may work in partnership with another agency information will be exchanged in relevant service areas. This will be made explicit to service users where appropriate.
- 2.6 An exception to the above controls on disclosure to third parties is where the withholding of information represents a serious risk to the resident, user, staff or members of the public. In these circumstances information will be actively shared with all relevant parties.
- 2.7 Certain types of sensitive information (e.g. if a client is living with AIDS or is HIV positive) must not be passed on to third parties without the users express permission.



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- 2.8 Where legal action is to be taken out against a user by the Association, all relevant information required will be given to the solicitor acting for Mind .
- 2.9 Requests from the police for information about service users or ex service users will be dealt with by the Manager. Information may be disclosed to the police where a resident, or service user is engaged in illegal activity which poses a risk to others.
- 2.10 In cases of suspected child neglect or abuse of vulnerable adults staff must always act on information where there is reasonable cause for concern. This should be referred immediately through their Manager to the relevant authorities.
- 2.11 If a service users family try to contact their relative through staff, Richmond Mind will take a message and pass it on, service contact will not be confirmed. Addresses and telephone numbers will not be passed without a service users permission.

3.0 CONFIDENTIALITY - STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- 3.1 Personal information including personnel files, supervision and appraisal notes, will be treated as confidential and kept in a locked secure place.
- 3.2 Information can only be accessed by those that have a genuine need to know, including the individual concerned, line managers /Director / Management Committee members.

4.0 CONFIDENTIALITY - CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS

- 4.1 In general, confidential information will not be made available to external contractors about individuals using services.
- 4.2 If in the cause of their work it is necessary for a consultant or contractor to know the nature of a project they must respect the confidentiality of that information.

5.0 INFORMATION ON THE GROUP AND ITS MEMBERS

- 5.1 Richmond Mind aims to ensure that the proceedings and activities of the organisations' Boards and Committees are open to clients statutory authorities and regulators, and members of the public, where appropriate.
- 5.2 Richmond Mind will make non-confidential board papers and minutes available on request and make key policies available on request.



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- 5.3 Richmond Mind will publish an annual report of its activities and performance, including details of its services and its accounts and information about the makeup of its Management Committee .
- 5.4 Any information request by the media must be referred to the Director or Chair of the Management board.
- 5.5 Where Richmond Mind is to publish client photographs in its annual report or on its website or in other external publications consent must first be sought from the service users concerned.

6.0 USER AND STAFF ACCESS TO PERSONAL RECORDS

6.1 *Introduction*

The policy on access to personal records, below, complies with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998. Under the Act personal information held on manual and automated systems must be accessible to the individual concerned who, where appropriate, has the right to have information about themselves corrected or erased if found to be incorrect or not required.

6.2 *Policy*

Service users and staff are entitled to access the data held on them and will be given access to this in accordance with Richmond Mind's data protection policy. All service users and staff have the right to have information corrected or erased, where appropriate.

6.3 *Computer Records*

Richmond Mind will give users and staff access to any personal information held on computer, in accordance with the procedures below.

6.4 *Information Held on File*

In respect of information held on manual files, Richmond Mind will give users and staff access to as much information held on file as is reasonably possible.

6.5 *Mind may withhold information on file but only when:*

- i) Information involves or relates to a third party, who has not given consent to its disclosure.



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- ii) Information has been given in confidence by a third party.
- iii) The information is held for the purposes of the prevention or detection of crime, or the prosecution of offenders.

7.0 Procedures

i) Computer Records:

Users and staff may request copies of all personal information kept about them on computer by writing to the scheme or relevant Manager.

- iii) The Manager will send the resident / user or staff member copies of the computer records informing the individual of his / her right to request any correction, if appropriate.
- iv) Where corrections are requested by a service user these must be authorised as appropriate by the service Manager.

Manual Records:

- v) Users or staff can arrange access to information held on their file(s) by making a request in writing.
- vi) The Manager must supervise access to files, ensuring that all information to be withheld from the resident or user or staff member is removed from the case file in advance of the appointment.
- viii) The individual should be given the opportunity for taking photocopies of information on file.
- ix) Where the individual wishes to amend or erase a record because of inaccuracy, this will be done after agreement by the relevant Manager. The individual will be notified of the outcome. Where there is disagreement, the individual's views will be recorded on file and attached to the record under question.