

Confidentiality Policy

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of the Confidentiality Policy is to:

- Provide staff, volunteers and clients with the organisation's understanding of confidentiality
- Provide clear guidelines regarding handling of confidential information
- Prescribe limits of behaviour and assign responsibilities.

Confidentiality is a central and integral part of the organisation. It offers safety and privacy. Information given is held in strict confidence, and in line with Data Protection Acts.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Data Protection Policy.

Responsibility for Confidentiality

Specific Responsibilities

Women's Aid is responsible for ensuring that all staff and volunteers involved in dealing with confidential information and data receive appropriate supervision and support regarding the confidentiality policy. Confidentiality is a contractual agreement for all staff of Women's Aid, and all volunteers sign a confidentiality agreement.

The following is an excerpt from the Women's Aid contract outlining staff responsibilities in relation to confidentiality: *"Women's Aid requires a very high standard of integrity and performance from all its employees. Where, in the course of their employment, staff members become aware of confidential information about the affairs of Women's Aid or clients of Women's Aid they must not reveal such information other than in the course of duty. This does not apply to communications properly made by them in the normal conduct of work for the organisation or when specific consent to disclose the information has been given by management."* **Appendix one outlines the volunteer agreement to confidentiality.**

Manager's Responsibility

The manager is responsible for ensuring that a copy of this document is available to all staff and volunteers and is available to users of the service.

Individual's Responsibility

Individual staff and volunteers are required to act in accordance with the policy. Failure to do so will be considered as an act of gross misconduct and will result in disciplinary action.

Collecting information

Women's Aid collects and uses anonymous service user information for the following purposes:

- For the purpose of statistical analysis, which helps us to offer a service based on client needs.
- To help us in accessing funding and other resources for the service.
- To comply with the Law in some cases.
- To enhance or improve services.
- To inform service development and on-going work of the organisation e.g. policy, communications and training.

Definition and principles of confidentiality

All information that:-

- a) is or has been obtained during, or in the course of involvement with, or has otherwise been acquired in trust due to involvement with the organisation,
- b) relates particularly to the organisation's business, clients or that of other persons or bodies with whom we have dealings of any sort, and
- c) has not been made public by, or with our authority, is confidential, and (save in the course of our business or as required by law) an employee/volunteer/service user shall not at any time, whether before or after the end of their involvement, disclose such information in any form to any person without our written consent.

Employees/volunteers are expected to exercise care to keep safe all documentary or other material containing confidential information as described in our Data protection policy.

Confidentiality Policy

Information held by the organisation on individuals and not independently available to a third party cannot be disclosed without the individual's consent and permission from Management.

Information pertaining to the organisation and its business cannot be disclosed to external parties without the consent and permission of management.

Limits to Confidentiality

Women's Aid Support Service has an obligation to share certain information about service users with external agencies. These may be some of the reasons why:

If we assist a service user in accessing other services and supports, we may have to provide some details to these services regarding their current status. Women's Aid will consult with service users regarding the information, which we provide on their behalf. Some of these services might be as follows:

- The Community Welfare Office
- Local Housing Authority
- TUSLA
- The Garda Síochána
- Court Services
- Child Protection & Welfare

Our service has a duty of care to report any child protection and welfare concerns to TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency. These concerns might arise from a disclosure by a service user or through something that we observe (Please refer to the Women's Aid Child Protection Policy). This is not a judgement of a service user, but merely our duty in fulfilling our responsibility under Children First. Our aim is to ensure children's safety while offering support to service users in relation to such issues.

Please note that no information will be shared except for as outlined.

Wrongful disclosure

Wrongful disclosure can occur in at least two ways. It can be by either act or omission. The first would be where confidential information is deliberately passed on to a third party. The second



would be where confidential information is disclosed to a third party through negligence. Wrongful disclosure will be considered as an act of gross misconduct and will result in disciplinary action.

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Appendix One – Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

I agree to uphold the right to confidentiality of the women who contact the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline for support, and that of all the women who work with Women's Aid. I agree not to disclose information about either outside of Women's Aid.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Helpline Manager Signature: _____

Date: _____