

**SHEFFIELD RAPE & SEXUAL ABUSE COUNSELLING SERVICE**

**Confidentiality Policy**

**What do we mean by confidentiality?**

**1. Client Confidentiality**

1.1 Sheffield Rape & Sexual Abuse Counselling Service (SRASACS) recognises that confidentiality is of the utmost importance if clients using the service are to feel safe & supported.

1.2 However, we recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where Counsellors may feel it necessary to break confidentiality outside the organisation. We have identified these areas as the following:

- a. Where a client may be in danger of harming herself
- b. Where others may be in danger of serious physical harm from the client (including the Prevention of Terrorism)
- c. Where the client may be threatening harm to the Counsellor or other women involved in the service
- d. Concern about a child at risk or in need (please see Child Protection Procedure).

1.3 Action will be taken subject to professional judgement after consultation with one other Worker & Supervisor. There may be some situations where the Counsellor feels that confidentiality must be broken & in that situation SRASACS supports the counsellor to gain the necessary support from their Supervisor or other experienced Counsellor (B.4.4.)

1.4 Wherever possible the Counsellor will aim to inform the client of her concerns & encourage her to seek appropriate support. Information about the client's GP, or other professional support will be requested when setting up a contract initially. The Counsellor should obtain contact information when contracting with the new client & if a client refuses to give this information, it must go to supervision & discussions should be had about appropriateness of offering a service. The

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1.5 Counsellor must set out the confidentiality guidelines clearly at that stage.

1.6 SRASACS Counsellors may discuss counselling session contents, whether face-to-face or phonenumber, amongst themselves in order to receive support & guidance for themselves. Clients will only be referred to by first name or number. (B.4.13 states: "Any discussion between the Counsellor & others should be purposeful & nor trivialising.")

## **2. Note-Taking**

2.1 All clients need to be informed that notes are kept on them & that all Workers in the organisation have access to them. The organisation requires Counsellors to fill in the attached as a minimum requirement for note-taking.

2.2 All clients have a right to see these notes & should be informed of this.

2.3 All clients' addresses & phone numbers are to be kept separately to client notes.

2.4 Individual counsellors are given a choice as to whether they keep more in-depth notes. However, they are responsible for ensuring that all client material is treated with the utmost care & any client notes are not taken out of the building. Paid Workers are to use their own desk drawer & Unpaid Workers will be allocated a file to keep their personal notes.

2.5 Counsellors will make their own notes for supervision & any identifiable material will need to be changed & clients need to be referred to by their number.

2.6 After a client leaves, her notes will be kept for a 7 year period, then will be destroyed. The law states that a client, after reaching the age of 18, can still pursue a claim up to 7 years after this age. For clients seen under the age of 18, her notes will be destroyed after this 7 year period. The counselling team is responsible for ensuring that they are destroyed appropriately.

2.7 Clients who use the phonenumber regularly need to be informed that brief notes will be kept so that they are guaranteed some consistency.

**3. CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES FOR ALL SRASACS WORKERS**

- 3.1 THIS BUILDING IS A **CONFIDENTIAL** ADDRESS & IS NOT TO BE DISCLOSED TO ANYONE OUTSIDE OF THE ORGANISATION.
- 3.2 ONLY WORKERS WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN A COUNSELLING ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION SHOULD DEAL WITH INCOMING/OUTGOING CALLS & MESSAGES FROM THE COUNSELLING LINE. IT IS THE COUNSELLORS RESPONSIBILITY TO INFORM THEIR CLIENTS TO USE ONLY THE ADVICE LINE NUMBER FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. ANY CLIENTS WHO DO RING THE OFFICE LINE WILL BE ADVISED OF THE HELPLINE TIME & NUMBER.
- 3.3 PERSONALISED POST SHOULD BE MARKED CONFIDENTIAL & SHOULD REMAIN UNOPENED & PASSED ON TO THE SPECIFIC MEMBERS OF STAFF. IN THE EVENT OF A WORKER BEING ON LONG-TERM SICK LEAVE/ABSENCE/LEAVING THE ORGANISATION, MAIL FOR THAT WORKER WILL BE OPENED BY AN APPROPRIATE PERSON.

WORKERS ARE NOT TO GIVE OUT ANY PERSONAL DETAILS EG HOME ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER TO CLIENTS. WORKERS SURNAMES SHOULD NOT USUALLY BE DISCLOSED.

PERSONAL INFORMATION ABOUT WORKERS & COMPLAINTS/DISCIPLINARY ACTION TO REMAIN WITHIN THE ORGANISATION. WORKERS ARE EXPECTED TO HOLD PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES. THE APPROPRIATE INFORMATION WILL BE SHARED EG WITH FUNDERS, TRADES UNIONS, OR LEGAL ADVISERS.

**DANGER OF HARM TO SELF & OTHERS**

- Act on the side of caution (best practice)
- A young person with suicidal tendencies is a child at risk or in need. (Please refer to Child Protection Procedure).

**CLIENT NOTES**

CLIENT NUMBER

DATE OF SESSION

SESSION NUMBER

WHEN DID YOU LAST TAKE THIS CLIENT TO SUPERVISION?

ARE THERE ANY ETHICAL DILEMMAS?