

## **Woking Mind Confidentiality Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Information about the members, employees and volunteers of Woking Mind is collected and stored.

1.2 A Confidentiality Policy is necessary for the following reasons:

1.2.1 To protect members, employees and volunteers from the possibility of information about them being passed onto individuals or organisations who have no right to that information.

1.2.2 To reassure members that good care will be taken with information which they give to Mind employees and volunteers.

1.2.3 To provide guidance to employees and volunteers on the extent to which confidentiality is to be preserved and circumstances in which they may breach confidentiality. For example, information about members may sometimes be exchanged between volunteers and employees within Woking Mind on a 'need to know' basis.

1.2.4 To reassure clients that the confidentiality of any complaint to or about Woking Mind will be given high priority in so far as this is consistent with the need to investigate the complaint.

### **2. General Confidentiality Statement**

2.1 It is a fundamental principle of Woking Mind that any information about the members, employees and volunteers is confidential and will not be passed onto third parties without consent.

2.2 Woking Mind recognises that many of its members will have problems or difficulties which they will not want to share widely.

2.3 Equally, one of the principal ways in which Woking Mind can help its members is to listen, and help them manage or resolve such problems and difficulties.

2.4 Woking Mind holds open events, such as a monthly community meeting, at which members are encouraged to explain their problems and difficulties. We believe that such events help our members because it enables the finding of solutions, and members are re-assured to find that they are not alone in their difficulties.

2.5 Where a member chooses to express a personal problem in such an open session they are deemed to have chosen also to forfeit their right to privacy on that matter. However, all present at the group will be reminded that the problem has been shared with them only. They will be encouraged not to pass on to others what they have heard and the employees and volunteers will not do so.

### **3. Legal and Statutory Requirements**

3.1 Whilst this Confidentiality Policy is of great importance to Woking Mind, it must not lead us to breaking the law. If any statutory body seeks information from us which we are bound to give, that information should be readily given. In such cases the Manager should be consulted before hand, if possible, or advised afterwards if not.

3.2 Whenever Woking Mind breaches confidence in either of the above manners, we should try to be open about it subsequently with the client and make every effort to rebuild their faith in us.

### **4. Care of Information**

Mind volunteers and employees will take care:

4.1 Not to be overheard when discussing confidential information on the phone, or with the member or appropriate staff.

4.2 Not to leave information lying around and to keep confidential information in locked filing cabinets when not in use.

### **5. Duty of Care**

5.1 Members with problems or difficulties are encouraged to share them on a one-to-one basis with our employees and volunteers. Where that occurs, the member is entitled to confidentiality and the recipient of the confidence may only pass it on with consent. However, the recipient may encourage or even urge such consent.

5.2 Woking Mind owes a 'duty of care' to its members and to the general public. It may therefore be necessary to breach confidentiality where a client is acting, or likely to act in a way that could cause serious harm to him or herself or to a person or persons with whom the member associates. In such circumstances the information may be passed to whosoever may attenuate the danger. This will usually be the Mental Health Worker with responsibility for the member. Wherever possible the recipient of the information

should consult with the Chairman or Vice Chairman, or at least one other employee or volunteer, before passing on the information. However, if the danger is immediate they should act and then report to the Chairman or Vice Chairman as soon as possible on what they have done. Such breaches of confidence should be rare.

5.3 Woking Mind also owes a 'duty of care' to the general public. It may therefore be necessary to pass on information to the police or statutory authorities where there is considered to be a serious risk to a particular person or persons, or to the public in general. Similarly, Woking Mind will not withhold any information concerning criminal activity of a serious nature. This should preferably be done with the knowledge of the person concerned and whenever possible with their cooperation but there may be circumstances where the risk to others is too great for this to be advisable or possible.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant Woking Mind policies e.g. 'How data is stored at Woking Mind' and the Complaints Policy and Procedures.

This policy is due for review in October 2012