

## **Student Advice Centre Confidentiality Policy**

### ***Core concepts***

- The entire 'relationship' that we have with a client is confidential. This includes the fact that they have contacted us, the data that they supply to us and the details of their case.
- This information is confidential within the Advice Centre i.e. all members of staff have access to the information. The only exception is when a conflict of interest has been identified (see Conflict of Interest policy)
- Except in the circumstances outlined in section 3 below we will not disclose any information without our client's express permission. In this situation we will ask our clients to complete a disclosure form.
- If a client feels we have breached our confidentiality policy they can complain using the Student Advice Centre Complaints Procedure.

### ***When would we disclose confidential information?***

- There are 3 situations in which we will disclose information:
  - i. When the client has asked us to. We will ask clients to complete an authority to disclose form stating who they would like us to contact and what they are happy for us to disclose.
  - ii. When we are required to by law.
  - iii. When, based on our professional judgement, we decide that the client's behaviour gives reasonable cause for concern that they may be at risk to themselves or another person. e.g. if they appear to require emergency medical help or there is a danger that someone else may face an immediate threat (such as a case of suspected child abuse).
- We will not breach confidentiality just because we are aware that a client intends to break the law unless it's reasonable to believe that a person may come to harm by them doing so.
- If a third party i.e. parent or partner contacts us to ask for information we will direct the caller to general information related to the procedure/law that they are enquiring about if relevant. We will always inform the client of who contacted us and what we told them.

### ***What process do we follow when considering disclosing to a third party***

- The adviser will raise the matter with the Advice Manager (or most senior specialist member of staff available) as a matter of urgency.
- The adviser will discuss the issues involved in the case and explain why they feel information should be disclosed to a third party and what would be achieved by doing so. The Advice Manager is responsible for identifying other options if possible. The Advice Manager will keep a record of this discussion.
- If the Advice Manager was not involved in the decision at the time, the deputising specialist will discuss and ensure the Advice Manager is aware.

- A report on the outcome is added to the initial notes and kept in the Disclosure to a Third Party Central File.
- Any disclosures are anonymised and explained in quarterly reports to LUU Officers.
- Should a complaint be made regarding this breach, this would be directed to the Director of Membership Services & Development..

### ***How do we verify the identity of our client before we release information to them?***

- If a client contacts us by telephone or email we will not release information unless they can confirm their student number and a piece of personal information i.e. address and date of birth.
- If a client comes into reception to ask for information related to their case we will check their student card before confirming that they are a client or releasing any information. If they are not a registered student (e.g. they are re-sitting as an external student) then we must see a form of ID.

### ***Monitoring and statistical records***

- Case records will be accessed for monitoring and auditing purposes by a designated external auditor who will be bound by this confidentiality policy. Clients are informed about this on the front of the casesheets.
- Details of how our casework statistics are managed are explained in the Student Advice Centre Data Protection Policy.

### ***Press contact and annual reports***

- We may notice a theme in our case work or find that a client's case flags up an issue that could be addressed as wider policy concern by one of the LUU Executive Committee (elected student officers). When this happens we will always ensure that any of the information that we provide to officers are fully anonymised to eliminate any identifying features to preserve client confidentiality.
- Press enquires that we receive are directed to the officers or the Marketing Department. If one of the officers ask us to either reply to a press enquiry or support them in replying we will never comment on an individual case and will always ensure that any general comments we make do not breach client confidentiality.
- From time to time we write internal reports and share 'advice successes' with LUU colleagues. No information included in these reports will contain identifiable features.

### ***How do we inform clients about our confidentiality policy?***

- We refer to this policy on the Data Protection Statement Form and make clients aware that they can ask for a copy of the full policy if they wish.
- We store copies of this policy on the front desk – available on request to all clients.
- We aim to have this policy on our section of the LUU website

- When we meet clients for the first time we explain who we are, what we do, how we can help and summarise the confidentiality policy.