

## **Individual Risk Sheet:**

**Volunteer Role:**

**Possible risky situations:**

**The risk:**

**Ways I could reduce the risk:**

**What help I should ask for:**

## **Confidentiality - Guidelines for Information Sharing:**

Beware of sharing information about the person you are supporting, their family and their circumstances with your family or close friends or casual acquaintances. By all means discuss with family and friends the nature of your volunteering but guard the information about the client.

Try to get into the habit of thinking before you talk.

### **CHECK!**

- *Why do I wish to share this information about the client?*
- *Why do I want to tell this person?*
- *Will there be any benefits if I share this information?*
- *If I share this information, would that create any difficulties for the client or their family?*
- *If I share this information, would that create any difficulties for the organisation?*
- *Will the recipient respect the confidentiality of the information?*
- *If the client were standing beside me, would I still share the information?*
- *Do I have the client's permission to share the information?*

## **Breaches Of Confidentiality:**

**Legitimate Breach** - If the young person was in danger it would be a legitimate breach to ensure their safety and well being, it would not necessarily be a breach at all depending on whether confidentiality rests with the organisation or the volunteer

**Inadvertent Breach** - where a member of staff or volunteer accidentally reveals a clients identity or other personal information or forgets to follow correct procedures for keeping personal details.

**Deliberate Breaches** - where a member of staff or volunteer knowingly fails to observe guidelines on confidentiality, disregarding procedures outlined in the policy and disclosing information without a client's consent other than when professionally or legally obliged to do so.

Most people involved with the organisation, be they client, staff member, volunteer, committee member has the right to expect that personal information should not be shared with others without their consent (except where the safety & well being of a young person is in question).

Many volunteers gather information about people in their role without even considering that that information should be kept confidential. Office volunteers need to think carefully about the information they have access to and how that information is stored and kept confidential - if they are worried about this they should speak to the volunteer co-ordinator.

Volunteers working in a number of situations are privy to 'knowledge' - e.g. those working in hospices' sometimes learn about families and their problems, those volunteering in a hospital may gain information about friends, neighbours or acquaintances' conditions. There are many situations where knowledge is gained second hand, either about clients or other volunteers, but there still needs to be an awareness of confidentiality.

## **Do's & Don'ts of Confidentiality:**

### **Do**

- do share with staff any concerns you might have about confidentiality
- do be careful what you talk about with whom, so that you do not break any confidentiality
- do ensure that any information about your role as a volunteer, which you share with family, friends or colleagues, is restricted to general information only
- maintain regular contact with your co-ordinator and keep hours sheets up to date
- do be aware of your own needs and limits about what you disclose to the client
- do make sure the client knows there is some information you must share with project workers and give them the opportunity to withhold further information

### **Don't**

- don't promise the client that you will keep a secret
- don't reveal personal information about the client or their family to anyone outside the project
- don't reveal personal information about yourself to the client and ask them to keep it secret
- don't forget the safety and well being of the client are paramount

# Indicators of Abuse

## **Physical Abuse:**

- Unexplained bruises on any part of the body - especially in various stages of healing
- Unexplained injuries - cuts, scratch marks, burns, scalds, bites
- Any injury which the child, parent or carer tries to hide or gives different explanations

## **Emotional Abuse:**

- failure to thrive
- timid and withdrawn
- over demanding
- mood swings

## **Sexual Abuse:**

- knows a lot more about sex than they should for their age
- complains of being sore in the genital or anal area - may refuse to get undressed or reluctant to go to the toilet - this may show itself in a difficulty walking or sitting down
- unusual avoidance of touch
- emotional withdrawal (lack of trust)

## **Neglect:**

- regularly hungry
- steals food from other children
- always dirty
- wears inappropriate clothing for season
- parents/carers regularly forget to pick them up or are out when you take them back
- pale, listless and underweight
- low self-esteem
- untreated medical problems

*This list is not exhaustive and all children may display some of the above at some time but these should be indicators and give a volunteer cause for concern and make them vigilant. With regard to child protection volunteers should always share information if they feel a child is at risk.*

## Dealing With Children

### **What stops children telling?**

- Direct threats - children are taught to obey their parents or adults.
- Fear of punishment
- Guilt and shame
- Lack of appropriate vocabulary to describe what is happening
- Not recognising the abuse as anything wrong - they may consider sexual abuse as part of a loving relationship
- In sexual abuse the abuse may be all they receive in response to their need for love and physical contact
- In sexual abuse they may love the abuser and feel that they are 'special', favoured in some way
- Lack of opportunity to be heard, some children attempt to tell but are not heard
- Awareness of the possible implications - family split up, medical examinations. Children may think their silence protects others

### **If a child discloses to you:**

- Listen carefully
- Try not to appear shocked
- Accept what they say but do not make any comment (Why didn't you tell someone before?)
- Stay calm and reassure them they have done the right thing
- Acknowledge that they have done the right thing
- Do not make promises that you cannot keep or that everything will be alright now
- Do not criticise the perpetrator
- Empathise with the child - do not tell them how they should be feeling
- Tell and show the child you are taking them seriously
- Always keep an open mind, think before you act and take an objective view of the situation
- Be honest - tell the child what you will do next