

LDCVS Policy: Confidentiality

Date adopted: 11/08/21

Purpose of the policy / policy statement

- 1.1 LDCVS recognizes that staff and volunteers gain information about individuals and organisations during their involvement at work. In most cases such information will not be stated as confidential, but we expect the use of discretion and respect in identifying whether information is expected to be confidential, and care needs to be exercised when discussing and sharing information.
- 1.2 This ensures we create trust in the community we seek to serve, and we can be approached with complex or sensitive situations without fear that we would misuse or be careless with the information received.
- 1.3 The principles outlined in this policy are, therefore, integral to the professional reputation of LDCVS.

Detailed policy statement

- 2.1 Information is held by LDCVS relating to groups, organisations, individuals, employees, trustees, and volunteers. We keep this information to enable us to best deliver our services, for monitoring purposes, and for reporting to funders.
- 2.2 In line with our Data Protection Policy, we should always disclose our collection and processing of personal data by using privacy notices. As a matter of courtesy and integrity, we should also as far as possible ensure that organisations and groups are aware when we collect and process data which doesn't fall within the scope of GDPR.
- 2.3 In the course of their legitimate work, colleagues will have access to information about individuals and organisations which the subject may reasonably expect to be kept private. Staff and volunteers should use discretion, care and respect in considering whether information should remain confidential, and check with the subject when they are unsure.
- 2.3 Within a supervision setting, employees and volunteers may need to share information in order to discuss issues, seek advice and check on their own practice. These meetings should be considered confidential, and staff and volunteers will not disclose any information considered sensitive to anyone outside that setting.
- 2.4 In the context of a shared office space, staff and volunteers will sometimes overhear potentially sensitive and confidential information. This information is not to be repeated or shared further unless the circumstances are exceptional.
- 2.5 Staff and volunteers have a duty to behave with discretion. However, in order to ensure that they are aware of which information may be considered sensitive we encourage staff and volunteers to mark documents accordingly, including the names of those who are entitled to access the information, and to make use of permissions features for electronic files.

- 2.6 Staff and volunteers accessing unauthorised files or breaching confidentiality may face disciplinary action. Ex-employees breaking confidentiality may face legal action.

Exceptional circumstances

- 2.7 LDCVS recognises that occasions may arise when staff or volunteers will need to breach confidentiality. Confidential or sensitive information relating to an individual may be divulged when there is a risk of danger to the individual, their family, a volunteer or employee, or to the public at large, or where it is against the law to withhold such information.
- 2.8 In these circumstances, information may be disclosed to external agencies such as the police, social services or other public bodies. LDCVS will take advice from such agencies before deciding whether to inform the subject that the disclosure has been made.

Applicability

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, consultants and contractors

Getting help

- 4.1 The Chief Officer and/or the Chair of Trustees should be contacted for advice on interpretations, resolution of problems, and special situations etc.

Related policies / references for more information

- 5.1 Policies:

Safeguarding Policy

Data Protection Policy

Conduct Policy

Disciplinary Policy

Complaints Policy

Implementation procedures

- 6.1 Overall responsibility for policy implementation and review rests with the Chief Officer. However, all staff and volunteers are obliged to adhere to this policy and to support its implementation.

Next review date

- 7.1 August 2024