

## Dealing with confidential information

Confidential information means that only certain people have permission to know about a particular issue. It is your responsibility to know what information is considered to be confidential and what is not confidential and to inquire in the practices set in the RYCH. Generally speaking, information will be confidential if it is about:

- Another employee, volunteer or external partner.
- An inhabitant of the RYCH.
- Sensitive information on the organisation running the RYCH.

A useful rule for you to follow is to keep information confidential until you have checked if you should communicate about it. Use your common sense regarding matters of confidentiality. E.g., if someone tells you something about their private life or of a personal nature it is respectful not to broadcast it to others. However, this should be weighed against the best interests of the person involved. In the case of information shared by the YP you should also consider how the information might affect their health and relationships with other people. Check with your line manager if you are unsure about the course of action to take. It is best to ask for the consent of the person involved before passing the information on, if not doing so would entail a breach of trust. These restraints do not apply if a risk exists that not disclosing the information will lead to harm to someone.

Keep in mind that YP need a network around them which they can trust. Helping young people to build and maintain connections with others is therefore of the utmost importance, whilst these connections should not pose a dangers to the YP. This balancing act might lead to dilemmas. E.g., there is a common concern among RYCW that having contact with family may jeopardise trust, or go against the need to develop independence.

If young people are asked if they are willing for their guardians to have contact with family member/s, the young person will usually see this as reasonable, particularly if they can see when someone has goodwill and their interests at heart.

In order to deal with confidential information it is good to keep the following key points in mind:

1. Ask for consent to involve parents/family supports
2. Ask for consent to receive information from parents/family
3. Take the time to develop a “Confidentiality Agreement” with a young person, including: with whom do you have their consent to discuss their care and what should and should not be discussed.
4. Provide timely, respectful, non-judgmental and supportive responses to parents/families.

**Whistleblowing:**

When you have genuine concerns on malpractices at work, an exception on dealing with confidential information exists under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Malpractice includes things such as crimes, civil offences, danger to health and safety or the environment and the covering up of any of these. If you think that there are malpractices in your workplace, you should first of all tell a relevant manager. If no action is taken you can seek legal advice. If you suspect malpractice, you have a right to seek advice. The best place to go is Public Concern at Work ([www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk)). This organisation specialises in whistleblowing. You are protected by law from any reprisals by your employer if you approach a legal adviser or a trade union. If you find that your employer takes no action despite your warnings, you are also protected if you go public. The law protects whistle-blowers from dismissal because it is believed to be in the public interest for malpractice to be dealt with.

**Source:**

Institute of Leadership & Management and QMD (2006) Handling confidential information. Retrieved on 08/09/2016 from

<http://www.bestpractice.uk.com/learningzone/lzdocs/Handling%20confidential%20information.pdf>