



TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL

# Services for Children, Young People and Families

Children in care

Children's homes

# Privacy and confidentiality

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## **Introduction**

The home and staff should respect a child's wish for privacy and confidentiality as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child.

Children and staff need to be made fully aware of what level and nature of privacy and confidentiality can be provided by the home.

The following guidance should be used to clarify on issues that may arise.

## **Inform the child**

Prior to, or upon admission to the home, staff must discuss with the child arrangements for privacy and confidentiality. Staff must make it clear to the child that confidentiality cannot always be given and that some information will need to be passed to other people on some occasions.

Staff must make a record of this discussion on the child's file.

## **Access to case records by staff and others**

When required and relevant to their responsibilities Residential Child Care Officers, Senior Managers, Safeguarding Team manager, NYAS undertaking Regulation 44 Visits, (record of permission needs to be on child's file) and Government Inspectors can access a child's residential case files. Any request from any other person, other than the child, for access to the residential files must be made to the Head of Service Children in Care.

Please also read:

- Access to Residential Records
- Access to Records
- Confidentiality

All records must be kept secure within the staff office

## **Passing on of information with child protection implications**

All staff working at the home must have access to the Trafford Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection/Child in Need Procedures and attend training as part of their induction to gain a clear understanding of these Procedures.

All staff must pass to the relevant person information (as detailed in the procedures) which places a child at risk, to enable child protection procedures to be put in place.

# Disclosure of illegal activities

Staff working at the home have a duty to protect the welfare of all the children living at the home. Staff will notify the police of any serious illegal activities disclosed that would put a child or others at risk.

## Privacy around the home

### General

- The home should make a clear distinction between private and communal space within the home.
- Children living at the home should have access to a telephone, which is both practically and privately located. This could be a unit mobile that the home makes available for this purpose.
- Children living at the home are to open their own mail. Staff must not open any mail which is addressed to a child. Children should be able to send and receive post privately.
- All staff working in the home are to work in accordance with Vetting of Visitors Guidance.

### Bedrooms

- Each child should be provided with a single occupancy bedroom, which the child can go to for privacy. The room should be kept locked when not in use and the child should have a key provided for their use.
- Each bedroom should contain a lockable, or otherwise safe, storage for personal possessions. This box should be kept locked by the child and staff are the spare key holder for the box. If there is a high risk that a dangerous item e.g. illegal substances, weapon is thought to be in the box, staff can search the box in accordance with the Room Search guidance.
- The office has a safe in which small valuable personal possessions can be stored.
- Staff should always knock and await a response to enter prior to entering a child's bedroom.

### **Where there are serious concerns for a child's welfare or an emergency situation entry without permission can take place.**

- Children should be encouraged to knock on doors for permission from other children to enter.
- Children's possessions should be kept in their own bedrooms to keep them safe from being lost.

- Any search of a child's possessions can only be undertaken in accordance with Room and Possession Searches guidance.

## **Confidentiality**

- The staff office door should be kept shut and children should be encouraged to knock for permission to enter.
- Staff must be vigilant regarding the safety of all records and files at all times.
- Staff need to ensure confidential conversations that take place daily are not being overheard by others.
- Children should be offered opportunities to have discussions with staff members; social worker etc in a room in which interruptions or disturbances are minimal and confidentiality can be maintained.
- In accordance with a child's Care Plan, suitable facilities should be made available within the Home for a child to meet privately with their parents, relatives and friends. The home should provide facilities for children to meet privately with a solicitor, advisor, social worker, appointed visitor, inspectors or other relevant professionals.
- Staff prior to disclosing information about a child over the telephone must ask whom they are speaking to and check it is appropriate. Staff should ask for the number and phone back, as an extra safeguard, if it is appropriate to make a disclosure.
- Staff must not discuss any personal details regarding a child with any other child.
- Trafford procedural guide on Confidentiality must be adhered to by staff working in the home. In the event of staff being in doubt with their response to a request for disclosure of information, a Senior Manager or legal department representative should be contacted for advice.

## **Privacy**

- All children living at the home should be provided with appropriate clothing that offers privacy.
- Showering, bathing and use of toilets are very private arrangements and must be afforded privacy. Staff should only enter in emergencies.