

Confidentiality - what does it really mean?

We believe strongly that any discussion you have with a therapist within the practice is private and should remain that way. Every member of the team here works to ensure that any information about you, written or spoken is kept private between the two of you. However, in keeping with the law and with good practice guidelines, there are some special situations which you should know about where information about you may be shared. Some of these situations arise routinely, and others are very rare;

Routine situations when information may be shared with others:

• Routine administration

As with any health care practice, the staff who handle the administration process on behalf of the therapists will have access to reports written about you in order to type them. They also have access to basic information about you in order to make appointments (i.e., name, address, telephone number).

• Routine supervision of therapists

In accordance with 'good practice' guidelines, all therapists, no matter how senior or experienced must seek advice from another qualified therapist on a regular basis. This is known as 'formal supervision'. Therapists may also discuss you with another member of the therapy team here in order to share ideas and expertise in the service of helping you. This is known as 'informal supervision'. Both formal and informal supervision operate as a safety mechanism designed to make sure that your therapist works to a high standard. During formal and informal supervision, only your first name will be discussed in order to preserve anonymity.

• Routine letters / reports written about you.

We believe it is good practice to communicate with other health care professionals. We would therefore like to write a routine letter to the person who referred you (if relevant) and to your G.P. usually only at the beginning and at the end of therapy. Information shared with GPs and with other health care professionals in routine letters is usually kept to a minimum, including your name and address, a brief outline of the difficulty you are experiencing, the approach suggested and the number of sessions planned or completed.

In your first meeting with a therapist here, we will ask you for your permission to write to the referrer (if relevant) and to your GP. If you prefer, you can refuse permission (however please see below 'Rare situations...'). Copies of letters written will usually be offered to you but you are also entitled to ask for them if you wish.

• Solicitors, Insurance Companies and Rehabilitation Companies

Solicitors, rehabilitation companies and insurance companies usually request telephone or written feedback and occasionally they request photocopies of the notes your therapist makes about you during sessions. This is usually only if they are funding your treatment or if you are involved in legal action (for example, if you have been involved in a car accident then both your own solicitor and the solicitor for the other side may request information). Your permission to divulge this information will always be sought before information is shared. (However, please see below; 'Rare Situations...').

• Your family / friends who contact us

Therapists at this practice will not contact your family or friends. However, occasionally, family and friends have telephoned us to ask questions. If this happens, we will never discuss any information about you without first receiving your permission to do so.

Rare Situations when information may be shared with others without your permission:

• If you or others are in serious danger

Your therapist has a legal obligation to contact other services (such as the police) if he or she believes that you or someone else is in serious danger. Whenever possible, your therapist will discuss this with you first.

• Court subpoena

In very rare situations, a court of law may formally request information about you even if you have not given your permission. However, this is extremely rare. If you think that this is possible, please let your therapist know.