

1.2.1 Policy Values and Principles

Scope of this chapter

This chapter provides the context within which all procedures should be applied and users must be familiar with it when implementing procedures.

It contains the overall policy for the provision of services to children. It also sets out the underlying values and principles for recording, confidentiality and consultation.

Regulations and standards

England

- Regulation 7: The children's wishes and feelings standard
- Guide to the children's wishes and feelings standard
- Regulation 16: Statement of purpose

Wales

- Regulation 6: Requirements in relation to the provision of service
- Regulation 7: Requirements in relation to statement of purpose
- Regulation 21: Standard of Care and Support – Overarching requirements

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Bryn Melyn Care Vision and Values

Bryn Melyn Care's vision is to provide the best life possible for children and young people in our care. We will achieve this by paying attention to their immediate needs, wishes and feelings, and by promoting positive aspiration for their futures.

We are committed to working with those who are the most vulnerable and challenging in the looked after system and to providing stable homes and expert interventions to support healing.

We will strive to make the lives of our children as fulfilling as possible and to challenge institutional and stigmatising attitudes of children.

Vision

To transform the lives of vulnerable young people...

Values

- Professionalism;
- Respect;
- Integrity;
- Determination;
- Excellence.

We value **P**rofessionalism in our practice judgements, attitudes, and behaviour.

We value **R**espect towards other ensuring a safe, trusting and supportive environment.

We value **I**ntegrity demonstrating honesty and openness.

We value **D**etermination and commitment to engage young people in learning experiences.

We value **E**xcellence in the pursuit of quality of life and better outcomes for young people.

By investing energy and resources in both our staff and young people we will promote individual performance, encourage participation, develop capability and realise potential. Our goal is to respond to the requirements of our young people and purchasers with professionalism, enthusiasm and total commitment.

Key Policy Statements

- **The Best Interests of the Child:** All decisions made in relation to children must have, as the first and paramount consideration, the best interests of the child;
- **Admissions, Assessment, Planning and Review:** Wherever possible we ensure that Children are placed in a planned and sensitive manner, and that services are provided on the basis of initial and continual assessment, planning, monitoring and review. To this end, each Child will have an Assessment and **Placement Plan** or Written Agreement that underpins their **Care Plan** and other significant plans and which accurately reflects the way in which identified needs will be met whilst placed with us.
- **Behaviour and Activity Risk Assessments** will be undertaken as part of the process of Placement Planning and review to ensure the Child or family lives within a structured and safe environment, within which it is hoped they can take steps towards meeting their full potential in all areas of their life and development;
- **Avoiding Delay:** All decisions in relation to the provision of services to children will be made promptly and within agreed time-scales, having regard to the needs of the child; the achievement of these timescales will be monitored and reviewed;
- **Valuing Diversity:** We are committed to the principles of anti-discriminatory practice; Children and families will be treated fairly with respect and dignity. Children and families will receive services which respect their race, culture, language, disability, sexuality and religion; and we will ensure that procedures and practices in our services are designed to combat racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination;

- **Valuing the Family:** Children have the right, whenever possible, to be brought up within their own family, either with their parents or relatives;
- **Partnership:** In promoting this right, services will be provided in partnership with parents and with other agencies to assist and support parents in meeting their children's needs within the family where possible;
- **Quality Services for Children:** Where services are provided for children, they will be provided by skilled people, committed to meeting children's needs; in a manner which promotes their physical, emotional, social and psychological needs and in an environment where they feel safe, positive and encouraged;
- **Keeping Children Informed:** Children will be provided with a wide range of accessible information about our services and those which they may require to improve their life chances;
- **Promoting Independence:** We encourage Children to be as independent as possible and to take a full and active part in everyday life as is appropriate to their age and level of understanding. To this end we provide Children with information, advice and further education to help prepare them for adult life. We work in partnership with appropriate agencies in the development and implementation of Pathway Plans and we will develop appropriate social and life skill packages which promote Children's independence and prepare them for the time when they move on from us or leave care;
- **Education:** We promote and support the educational attainment of Children throughout the time they live with us. A positive learning environment is promoted both at school and within the home, for example, by supporting Children with homework, coursework and possibly home study. Bryn Melyn also work closely with social workers and other professionals e.g. teachers to ensure that each Child has a clear **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** which accurately reflects their needs and is reviewed at regular intervals. Each will be regularly reviewed and any changes made will be communicated to all relevant parties;
- **Health Care:** Bryn Melyn promotes children's healthcare, ensuring that there is a continuity of treatment and that children's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are properly assessed and accounted for. Care is taken to ensure that the needs of children from differing cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds are addressed appropriately. All children are provided with healthcare assessments and screening resulting in a Health Care Plan designed to ensure their healthcare needs, including immunisations, are up to date. Children are provided with guidance, advice and support on health and personal care including sexual health and relationships, smoking and other drugs or solvents and we ensure that individual needs are addressed in Placement Plans;
- **Leisure and Recreation:** Children are provided with opportunities to participate in a range of leisure, exercise and recreational activities appropriate to their needs, abilities and interests. Bryn Melyn have a budget to fund suitable leisure activities and consideration is given to how young people will be encouraged and financially supported. Children's birthdays, name days, cultural and religious festivals will be celebrated where appropriate, and children will participate with staff in the planning of these events. Children are to be encouraged and supported to pursue particular interests and develop confidence in social skills within and outside the home. There is also a balance between free and controlled time in the daily routine and children are given opportunities to rest and relax.
- **Protecting Children:** We understand our first priority is to promote Children's rights, protect them from harm or injury and safeguard their welfare. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure staff/carers and Children and parents are informed about how to deal with suspicions or allegations of **Significant Harm**, and we will ensure that any issue is dealt with promptly, in keeping with **Local Safeguarding Partnership** procedures.
- **Physical Contact and Relationships:** We encourage staff/carers to develop professional relationships with Children, based on clear boundaries, which demonstrate affection, acceptance and reassurance. We encourage staff/carers to use appropriate physical contact,

positively and safely in keeping with Children's past experiences, needs and wishes. We understand that staff/carers often have to spend time alone with Children, but we ensure that such practice is underpinned by effective procedures, evidence-based risk assessments and training which safeguard the interests of both Children and staff/carers. No play fighting under any circumstances between the Children or between the staff/carers and Children is allowed;

- **Listening and Taking Action:** We will promote an 'open door' culture for all children, which encourages them to express their views, wishes and feelings; and say what they think about anything which affects them. We will then do all we can to ensure their views are taken into account when decisions are made about them;

Where children have communication difficulties this will be achieved by utilising their preferred communication methods; this may include – PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), widget or Makaton as required.

- **Comments, Compliments and Grievances:** We welcome comments, both positive and critical about the service we provide, and actively seek information and feedback under our review and quality of care procedures. Routinely, we seek information through consultative questionnaires from all professional bodies, Children and their parents/carers who have knowledge about the service. The purpose of seeking this information is to give us the opportunity to learn, adapt and provide a better service;

Where children have communication difficulties this will be achieved by utilising their preferred communication methods; this may include – PECS, widget or Makaton as required.

- **Resolving Dissatisfaction:** Where children, or others on their behalf, are dissatisfied, we will take steps to resolve their dissatisfaction and provide the opportunity for them to offer feedback if they wish.
 - **Respecting Privacy:** Children will be treated with respect and afforded privacy, where they can express their individuality through their possessions which they can enjoy and, when they move on, take with them;
 - **Promoting Contact:** We promote meaningful contact between Children, their families, friends and other significant persons unless particular circumstances indicate that such contact would not be in their best interests. We will assist Children in having regular contact with official visitors such as Field Social Workers and those that have some responsibility for the Child's welfare. We will encourage those with **Parental Responsibility** to participate in some way in the Child's daily life in so far as this is compatible with the facilities of the home, the Child's **Placement Plan** and associated agreements. We encourage Children to establish and maintain relationships with friends within and outside the home and with people from the wider community. We take steps to ensure that such relationships protect Children's rights and interests;
 - **Safe Practices, Health and Safety:** We have a written Health and Safety policy which clarifies responsibilities under The Health and Safety at Work Act and related legislative guidance. In accordance with this we implement controls of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities. Bryn Melyn has a senior manager responsible for Health and Safety who uses the services of an external Health & Safety Consultant and designated Health and Safety representatives. Each resource and department completes comprehensive Health and Safety Risk Assessments, which are regularly reviewed and monitored. Utmost vigilance is ensured in the safe handling and use of substances and information, instruction and training is given to all employees;
 - **Monitoring:** We will ensure that all children receive regular and frequent visits from their social workers for the purposes of monitoring and reviewing the suitability of their placement arrangements.
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Equality and Diversity

Each of the following values is summarised in detail below (you can click on any of these values to access the individual summary or scroll down to browse them all).

Equality and diversity for children and young people

Inclusion for children and young people

Equality in Employment

Disability Discrimination

Equality and diversity for children and young people

See also **Caring for Children from Minority Ethnic Groups Guidance**

- We encourage children to develop respect for themselves and for others;
- We deliver services that recognise and build on the strengths of children and young people from all cultures, religions, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability and backgrounds; in ways that meet their needs and help them to achieve their full potential;
- Every effort is made to ensure that Homes are welcoming to all children and young people and others significant in their care and wellbeing; this effort is reflected in the communication around the Home, including: posters, information boards, displays and leaflets. In addition to this, resources used to develop work with children and young people are chosen for their suitability and anti-oppressive nature;
- Children are offered opportunities to try out new experiences, which are not restricted by traditional gender options;
- Staff are expected to challenge attitudes, behaviour and language that are non-inclusive and discriminatory, in a positive way;
- Managers are expected to monitor the range of children and young people placed within the Home in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability. This is to ensure the service provision is reaching all and not creating barriers to certain groups.

Inclusion for children and young people

- All children are given the opportunity to be cared for and educated. Where possible this is alongside their peers in order to develop their full potential;
- Children are encouraged and supported to understand their rights and be well-informed about ways of challenging discrimination;
- Home's managers are expected to identify local community resources that contribute to meeting the needs of individuals- these are highlighted and promoted and where they do not meet required needs alternatives are sought and suitably identified regardless of geographical location, for example hairdressers who specialise in braiding or cutting African Caribbean hair;
- Children are cared for by staff who have been suitably trained in all aspects of equality and diversity including legislation and their responsibilities;
- Home's managers ensure that assessments of the child and the families specific needs is carried out with an aim to support and develop their full potential;

- Home's managers are expected to examine ways in which diversity can be valued and activities adapted to meet the Individual child's needs including food preparation and menu choices;
- Staff are expected to acknowledge the importance of maintaining a link between the child's home and the Children's Home in meeting the individual's need;
- Staff are expected to offer appropriate support to aid inclusion and ensure that the children and young people can fully participate in the Home's activities. If necessary seek additional support in order to do this;
- Additional support is offered to staff and/or Children who are finding difficulty in understanding diverse or complex situations.

Equality in Employment

- We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable and although equality of opportunity has been a long-standing feature of our employment practices and procedure, we have made the decision to adopt a formal equal opportunities policy. Breaches of the policy will lead to disciplinary proceedings and if appropriate, disciplinary action;
- The aim of the policy is to ensure no job applicant or employee is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, colour, creed, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, political opinion or affiliation, sex, marital status, sexual orientation or disability;
- We will ensure that the policy is circulated to any agencies responsible for our recruitment and a copy of the policy will be made available for all employees and made known to all applicants for employment;
- The policy will be communicated to all private contractors reminding them of their responsibilities towards the equality of opportunity;
- The policy will be implemented in accordance with the appropriate statutory requirements and full account will be taken of all available guidance and in particular any relevant Codes of Practice;
- We will maintain a neutral working environment in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated.

Recruitment and Selection

- The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or subconsciously, in making these decisions;
- Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy;
- Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with our equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any person specifications;
- We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of the vacancies;
- We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources, which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group;
- All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job;

- All employees involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate;
- More than one person will carry out short listing and interviewing where possible;
- Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of any discriminatory nature;
- We will not disqualify any applicant because he/she is unable to complete an application unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the job;
- Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other Staff.

Training and Promotion

- Senior staff will receive training in the application of this policy to ensure that they are aware of its contents and provisions;
- All promotion will be in line with this policy.

Monitoring

- We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy;
- Monitoring may involve:
 - The collection and classification of information regarding the race in terms of ethnic/national origin, the sex and disability of all current employees;
 - The examination by ethnic/national origin, sex and disability of the distribution of employees and the success rate of the applicants;
 - Recording recruitment, training and promotional records of all employees, the decisions reached and the reason for those decisions;
- The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and Staff.

Disability Discrimination

We believe in providing a welcoming, comfortable and accessible environment that is safe and easy to use for all children and young people, for parents, relatives, staff, visitors and other users of the premises. We will endeavour to achieve equality of opportunity for all and promote equal access to facilities. Where possible, we will avoid physical features that make it difficult for people with a disability and will make reasonable adjustments to the environment in order to enable access and use.

Recording Values and Principles

Also see **[Access to Records Procedure](#)**

Each of the following values is summarised in detail below (you can click on any of these values to access the individual summary or scroll down to browse them all)

[Records must be kept on all Children](#)

[The design of records and forms must be approved](#)

[Children and their families must be informed about their records](#)

[The practitioner primarily involved should complete the record](#)

[All relevant information about children and their families must be recorded](#)

[Children and their families should be involved in the recording process](#)

[Information about children/their families should be shared with them](#)

[Managers must monitor information held in confidential section of records](#)

[Records must be legible, signed and dated](#)

[Records must be kept up to date](#)

[Records must be written in plain English and prejudice must be avoided](#)

[Records must be accurate and adequate](#)

[Managers must oversee, monitor and review records](#)

[Records should be kept securely](#)

[Removal of records must be an exceptional occurrence](#)

[Records moved to a new location must be monitored](#)

[Records must usually be retained after closure](#)

Records must be kept on all children

Records must be kept on all children: in the form of paper files but computer records, audio or video recordings may also be kept.

Information held in electronic records must accurately reflect the corresponding information recorded within paper files.

Records held on paper may extend to more than one volume. Where more than one volume exists, the dates covered by each volume must be clearly recorded on the front cover.

All records, irrespective of whether they are physical or electronic should be securely kept and electronic messaging (e.g. emails) should also be sent in a secure and safe way so as to preserve their confidential and professional nature.

The design of records and forms must be approved

Records and forms must be designed to fit their purpose and used consistently across the organisation.

The design of all records and forms must be approved by company before coming into use.

Children and their families must be informed about their records

Children and their families have a right to:

- Be informed about the records kept on them and the reasons why;
- Their rights to confidentiality; and
- To have access to their records.

See **Confidentiality Values and Principles**

Information must be provided in a form that children and their families will understand - in their preferred language or method of communication. An interpreter will be provided if needed.

The practitioner primarily involved should complete the record

The practitioner primarily involved, that is by the person who directly observes or witnesses the event which is being recorded or who has participated in the meeting/conversation, must complete records.

Where this is not possible and records are completed or updated by other people, it must be clear from the record who has provided the information being recorded. Preferably the originator should read and sign the record.

Records of decisions must show who has made the decision and the basis on which it has been made.

All relevant information about children and their families must be recorded

All visits, meetings or appointments made in relation to children must be recorded, stating who was present or seen, the relevant discussions which occurred, actions or decisions taken and by whom; the reasons for taking any decisions should also be recorded.

All other relevant contacts with children, their families, colleagues, professionals or other significant people must be recorded. When recording such contacts, it will be necessary to state who was present or seen, the relevant discussions which occurred, actions or decisions taken and by whom; the reasons for taking any decisions should also be recorded. This includes conversations, phone calls, visits, letters, emails, assessments and reports.

Children and their families should be involved in the recording process

Children must be routinely involved in the process of gathering and recording information about them. They should feel they are part of the recording process.

They should be asked to provide information, express their own views and wishes, and contribute to assessments, reports and to the formulation of plans. The child should have the opportunity to have support to be able to do this if needed, through an Advocate and/or through specialist help, e.g. signer.

It is recommended that any contribution the child may wish to make, any written material, certificates etc. should be included on the record as copies, so that the child retains the original items so that they have their own record of their wishes, progress etc. Children and their parents must be asked to give their agreement to the sharing of information about them with others. Information should be shared with the consent of the child and family if appropriate and where possible the wishes of those who do not wish confidential information to be shared should be respected. Information can still be shared without consent if it is in the public interest to do so. Information sharing decisions should be based on consideration of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by the sharing.

In such circumstances ensure that the information shared is necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared and shared only with those who need to have it.

Information about Children and their families should normally be shared with them

Information obtained about children and their families should be shared with them unless to do so would place them or others at risk.

For example, where the sharing of the information may place the child or another person at risk, or where the Police request that information should be withheld in order to enable them to investigate or prosecute a serious offence.

Where information is recorded which should not be shared with the child concerned, it should be placed in the Confidential Section of the child's file and a note of the lodging of the document should be recorded.

Where records contain information about third parties (for example, other family members or other children), this information cannot usually be shared, unless permission is gained from the person concerned. In such cases efforts must be made to separate the information relating to third parties from that concerning the child/parents.

When sharing a record it is important to record who it was shared with and when. The sharing of all decision-making documents such as assessments, care plans, reviews, reports and agreements make it easier for everyone to know what is expected and to work together better.

Managers must monitor information in the Confidential Section of the child's file

Managers must monitor information held in the Confidential section of files, ensuring that the reason for holding it there is valid; if not, it should be shared with the child and/or moved to another section of the file.

However, before sharing any information previously deemed to be confidential, the manager must take all reasonable steps to consult the originator and take account of their views and wishes.

Records must be legible, signed and dated

If possible, manual records should be typed or handwritten in black ink and all records must be signed and dated and the pages numbered to assist in a reader being able to follow 'the child's story'. Those

completing computerised records must show their name and the date when the recording was completed.

Any handwritten records must be produced so that readers not familiar with the handwriting of the writer can read the records quickly and easily. It must be possible to distinguish the name and post title or status of the person completing the record. If there is any doubt of the identity of the writer from a signature, the name should be printed.

Records must be up to date

Records should be updated as information becomes available or as decisions or actions are taken as soon as practicable or, at the latest, within 24 hours of the event.

Where records are made or updated late or after the event, the fact must be stated as a 'Late Entry' in the record, and the date and time of the entry must be included.

Records must be written in plain English and prejudice must be avoided

Records must be written concisely, in plain English, and must always be written in a way that recognises the child or their parent/carer will access the record.

E-mail communication to colleagues and other professionals (that will be included in the record) should always be completed with the same care and attention. The recording should certainly not contain any expressions that might give offence to any individual or group of people on the basis of race, culture, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Use of technical or professional terms and abbreviations must be kept to a minimum; and if there is likely to be any doubt of their meaning, they must be defined or explained.

See **Access to Records Procedure**

Records must be accurate and adequate

Care must be taken to ensure that information contained in records is relevant and accurate and is sufficient to meet legislative responsibilities and the requirements of these procedures.

Every effort must be made to ensure records are factually correct.

Records must distinguish clearly between facts, opinions, assessments, judgements and decisions. Records must also distinguish between first-hand information and information obtained from third parties.

See **Confidentiality Values and Principles**

Managers must oversee and monitor all records

The overall responsibility for ensuring all records are maintained appropriately rests with managers with day to day responsibility, delegated to other staff as appropriate.

The Manager should routinely check samples of records to ensure they are up to date and maintained as required and, if not, that deficiencies are rectified as soon as practicable.

Records should be kept securely

All records held on children must be kept securely.

Children's files should normally be stored in a locked cabinet, or a similar manner, usually in an office which only staff have access to.

Other day to day records, such as Contact or Daily Records, should also be kept securely in a manner authorised by the manager.

These records should not be left unattended when not in their normal location.

All electronic records must be kept securely and comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Removal of records must be an exceptional occurrence

Records should not normally be taken from the location where they are normally kept.

If it is necessary to remove a record from the home, a manager, who should stipulate or agree how long it is necessary to remove the record, should approve this. The manager must also be satisfied that adequate measures are in place to ensure the security of the record(s) whilst they are removed.

For example, records must never be left in unattended vehicles.

The authorisation for a record to be removed must be recorded and those who may have need to see the records should be informed of their removal.

The manager must then ensure the record is returned as required/agreed.

Records moved to a new location must be monitored

Where records are necessarily moved to a new location, the date of transfer should be clearly recorded by a Manager.

The same person should check that the records have arrived at their intended destination.

If records are moving because of a case transfer an audit should be carried out by a manager prior to transfer to ensure all relevant information and documents are available on the child's record.

Records must usually be retained after closure

Records must be retained for 75 years from the date of birth of the child or 15 years from the date of death in the case of a child who dies before the age of 18

When a file is closed, the date for its destruction should be put on the cover and on the computer record. Records should be destroyed on the relevant date unless the person concerned has been re-referred. Each home and team should maintain a list of records which have been destroyed, the date when they were destroyed and by whom.

Confidentiality Values and Principles

Relevant guidance: **Information Sharing**

It is our joint responsibility to ensure that information pertaining to children is protected, and that only those who have a legal right, are given access.

All information, whether verbal or in writing, must be managed sensitively, giving paramount consideration to the welfare and safety of children.

The legal requirements are set out below, but the principle is, that all information must be kept confidential unless disclosure has been consented* by the subject child/person, or disclosure is in the public interest e.g. the disclosure will help to protect a child or others from being harmed or a criminal offence being committed.

*Such consent, by a child, must be informed - see **Consents Guidance**.

Each of the following values is summarised in detail below (you can click on any of these values to access the individual summary or scroll down to browse them all).

Legal duty of confidence

Disclosure of confidential information in exceptional circumstances

Informing children about disclosure

Disclosures and sharing information with colleagues and agencies

Legal duty of confidence

Personal information held about children is subject to a legal duty of confidence as adults, and should not normally be disclosed without the consent of the subject.

The legal framework for confidentiality is contained in common law, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Disclosure of confidential information in exceptional circumstances

Whilst the general principle is that information obtained about children must be shared with them and not with others, there are exceptions. The public interest in child protection overrides the public interest in maintaining confidentiality and the law permits the disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard a child or children. Effective information sharing underpins integrated working and is a vital element of both early intervention and safeguarding.

Disclosure should be justifiable in each case, for example to provide information to professionals from other agencies working with the child, and where possible and appropriate, the agreement of the person concerned should be obtained.

Those working with children must make it clear that confidentiality may not be maintained if the disclosure of information is necessary in the interests of the child.

Even in these circumstances, disclosure will be appropriate for the purpose and only to the extent necessary to achieve that purpose. There may also be situations where third parties have a statutory right of access to the information or where a Court Order requires that access be given.

The circumstances in which information held in records on children and families can and should be disclosed and shared with others with or without consent are set out in the following sections.

In all other cases, where third parties such as advocates, solicitors or external researchers request access to information, this should only be given if written consent is given by the person concerned.

Informing children about disclosure

Children should be informed of the circumstances in which information about them will be shared with other professionals. This may be provided in the form of a User/Children's Guide or in other ways, and it will be made clear that in each case the information passed on will only be what is relevant and on a 'need to know' basis.

Disclosures and sharing information with colleagues and agencies

Sharing information promptly with others working with the same child, or who may need to know, is invariably the key to safeguarding the child's interests.

Therefore, relevant information about children must be shared with colleagues, other professionals or agencies who may have a role to play in their care.

However, the general principle is that information may only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

For example:

- Where professionals are undertaking a Child Protection Enquiry or Complaints investigation in relation to a child;
- Where the Police are investigating a criminal offence or require information to help them find an absent, missing or absconded child;
- Where information is requested in the furtherance of an inquiry or tribunal, or for the purposes of a Part 8 Review.

In such circumstances the person to whom the information relates should be informed that records have been requested unless to do so would prejudice the purpose of the request.

Any objections they have should be considered before responding to the person making the request.

Where information or records are passed to others it should be noted and confirmed in writing.

Information may also be disclosed to persons who have a statutory right of access to the information; for example

- Where the Court directs that records be produced or a Children's Guardian is appointed;
- Where information is requested by Inspectors of the **Regulatory Authority** e.g. Ofsted.

Where information is requested by telephone or electronically, great care must be taken to ensure that the recipient is entitled to receive the information requested. Where there is any doubt the information may not be provided without the approval of a Manager.

Consultation Values and Principles

Each of the following values is summarised in detail below (you can click them to access the individual summary or scroll down to browse them both).

General Principle of Consultation

Management Consultation

General Principles of Consultation

Everyone involved in the receipt and delivery of services should be consulted about decisions which may affect them. This includes children, their parents, other significant family members and those charged with providing the service; including managers, staff, carers and professionals or colleagues from other agencies.

This means that people's views should be sought and taken into account in relation to all decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Consultation should take place on a regular and frequent basis and assumptions should not be made about the inability or lack of interest of those who should be consulted.

Where people have communication difficulties, or any sort, suitable means must be provided to enable them to be consulted; including access to advocates or representatives who may speak on their behalf.

Consultation should be undertaken in a creative and attractive manner.

If consultation is not possible or is restricted, for whatever reason, steps should be taken to ensure they are informed of the decisions as soon as practicable thereafter; an explanation should be given and the person involved given the opportunity to make a comment and express their views.

If it is then felt that a different decision may have been appropriate, steps should be taken to reconsider it.

If decisions are made against people's wishes, they should be informed of the decision and the reasons for the decision should be explained. In these circumstances, the person should be informed of any rights they have to formally challenge the decision, for example by way of a Complaints or Grievance Procedure.

Management Consultation

Unless otherwise stated in specific procedures in this manual, it is assumed that people working in this organisation will take reasonable steps to keep their managers informed of their actions; and will consult and seek their approval where they do not have decision making responsibility delegated to them.

In order to facilitate this, managers must ensure that effective lines of communication are established and maintained.

If procedures in this manual require that managers are informed within specified timescales or their approval is sought before actions are taken, this must be complied with unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent it; for example, where it is necessary to act immediately to protect a child from injury.

In which case, the most senior person should take what action seems appropriate in the circumstances and the manager must then be informed as soon as practicable thereafter, but within 24 hours.

Revision History

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End