

## **Confidentiality & Data Protection Policy**

Harrow SENDIAS is committed to providing a confidential service to all its users and recognises that parents and young people should be able to access the service in confidence. Harrow SENDIAS works in line with Family Action's Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Confidentiality Policy.

We aim to ensure that parents and young people are able to access support and information in complete confidence and be safe in the knowledge that the information they provide is not shared with anyone else without their prior permission.

We respect the right of anyone to contact the service anonymously and will not ask for detailed information if the caller wishes to remain anonymous.

The service is completely confidential unless a member of staff has a concern about safeguarding which must take a priority over confidentiality. All staff have a legal obligation to report any concerns.

### **Procedures:**

- Harrow SENDIAS operates a self-referral system where parents/young people can contact the service directly. Where a parent/ young person feels unable to make contact themselves, families should be supported to refer by the professionals involved. We may on occasions accept a professional's referral on the clear understanding that permission has been gained from the parent/young person.
- We will not inform any other person or agency that a parent/young person has contacted the service without their prior permission.
- Harrow SENDIAS staff will always obtain permission from parents/young people before contacting or discussing the situation with other professionals.
- All members of staff undertake not to share any information about a parent/young person with other agencies unless written consent is given in advance.
- Harrow SENDIAS staff will not access any information relating to a child, young person or their family unless they have prior permission.
- We usually contact parents/young people on their home or mobile phone & will always check whether it is acceptable to make contact on a work number or leave messages with family members.
- Case notes are kept both on paper and electronically. The office is not shared and all paper files are kept in locked cabinets accessed only by SENDIAS staff. Occasionally paper files need to be taken out of the office Harrow SENDIAS staff are responsible for ensuring that the files are kept safe and secure. Electronic case

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notes are only accessed by Harrow SENDIAS staff and all computers have two layers of password protection.

- On initial contact, the service's confidentiality principles will be explained on either the phone or face-to-face and written consent to data storage and information sharing will be sought.
- All staff & volunteers MUST adhere to the principles included in the confidentiality policy.

### Use of Data

Harrow SENDIAS complies with the Data Protection Act 1998. This applies to all personal information held about living people and applies to both electronic and hard copy information.

- The service maintains an electronic database which is password protected and accessed only by SENDIAS staff.
- The database is used primarily to help staff record notes & manage cases. Information is also used to monitor the take up of the service, identify any specific issues and provide data for reports (in anonymous form) to commissioners and other third parties.
- Service users are regularly asked for feedback; some quotes may be used in reports and promotional materials but these will always be anonymised so that individuals cannot be recognised.
- Harrow SENDIAS staff will always ask for permission to pass on information. The only occasion when we will pass on information without direct permission is where there is a legal requirement to do so or where we believe that not doing so may put a child or another vulnerable individual at risk.
- If a Subject Access Request for Personal Information is received from a parent/young person whose information is held by SENDIAS, the request will be considered in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998
- If a Freedom of Information request is received either directly or via the Local Authority for non-personal information, then this request will be considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000