



Review Sheet



Last Reviewed
15 Dec '20



Last Amended
15 Dec '20



Next Planned Review in 12 months, or
sooner as required.

Business impact



MEDIUM IMPACT

Changes are important, but urgent implementation is not required, incorporate into your existing workflow.

Reason for this review

Scheduled review

Were changes made?

Yes

Summary:

This policy details how to ensure that data protection and confidentiality are maintained within a service. It has been reviewed and updated, with reference to the coronavirus added in section 4.8 and an ICO link also included in the references section. Other minor content changes made and references updated to ensure they remain current.

Relevant legislation:

- The Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015
- The Care Act 2014
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018

Underpinning knowledge - What have we used to ensure that the policy is current:

- Author: HM Government, (2018), *Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice> [Accessed: 15/12/2020]
- Author: NICE, (2018), *Decision-making and mental capacity*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng108> [Accessed: 15/12/2020]
- Author: ICO, (2019), *Guide to Data Protection*. [Online] Available from: <http://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/> [Accessed: 15/12/2020]
- Author: NHS Digital, (2019), *Data Security Protection Toolkit*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.dsptoolkit.nhs.uk/> [Accessed: 15/12/2020]
- Author: NHS Digital, (2019), *Data and Information*. [Online] Available from: <http://digital.nhs.uk/> [Accessed: 15/12/2020]
- Author: NHS Digital, (2018), *A Guide to Confidentiality in Health and Social Care*. [Online] Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/looking-after-information/data-security-and-information-governance/codes-of-practice-for-handling-information-in-health-and-care/a-guide-to-confidentiality-in-health-and-social-care> [Accessed: 15/12/2020]
- Author: ICO, (2020), *Data protection and coronavirus advice for organisations*. [Online] Available from: <https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-recovery-data-protection-advice-for-organisations/> [Accessed: 15/12/2020]

Suggested action:

- Encourage sharing the policy through the use of the QCS App
- Share 'Key Facts' with all staff
- Ensure relevant staff are aware of the content of the whole policy

Equality Impact Assessment:

QCS have undertaken an equality analysis during the review of this policy. This statement is a written record that demonstrates that we have shown due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with respect to the characteristics protected by equality law.



1. Purpose

1.1 To detail the rights of Service Users relating to confidentiality and data protection and issues that staff need to be aware of when processing confidential information within First Choice Home Care.

1.2 This is one of a suite of policies that relates to Data Protection, Information Governance, Data Quality and Security and the Human Rights of Service Users and dovetails to form a framework that ensures full legal compliance and best practice.

1.3 To support First Choice Home Care in meeting the following Key Lines of Enquiry:

Key Question	Key Lines of Enquiry
SAFE	S2: How are risks to people assessed and their safety monitored and managed so they are supported to stay safe and their freedom is respected?
WELL-LED	W2: Does the governance framework ensure that responsibilities are clear and that quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements are understood and managed?

1.4 To meet the legal requirements of the regulated activities that {First Choice Home Care} is registered to provide:

- The Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015
- The Care Act 2014
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018



2. Scope

2.1 The following roles may be affected by this policy:

- All staff

2.2 The following Service Users may be affected by this policy:

- Service Users

2.3 The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:

- Family
- Advocates
- Commissioners
- External health professionals
- Local Authority
- NHS



3. Objectives

3.1 To outline the principles related to confidentiality and to support staff in applying these principles.

3.2 To establish the approach of First Choice Home Care to ensuring the confidentiality of personally identifiable information.

3.3 To inform Service Users, their families, stakeholders and carers about the confidentiality obligations of First Choice Home Care and how we intend to meet them.

3.4 Inform staff working for (or on behalf of) First Choice Home Care of their responsibilities with regards to confidentiality and personally identifiable information, and how First Choice Home Care will enable these to be met.



4. Policy

4.1 First Choice Home Care recognises that we have a duty of confidentiality to our Service Users and staff. We believe that respecting an individual's right to a private life, which includes confidentiality, is important in ensuring a trusting, caring environment where both Service Users and staff are confident that information about them will be protected safely and not shared inappropriately or unnecessarily.

It is the policy of First Choice Home Care that we will only share information that is in the best interest of the Service Users and with their consent. We aim to comply with the relevant legislation and include the [7 Caldicott principles](#).

4.2 Core Principles of Confidentiality

- All staff will ensure that all Service User information remains confidential. Service Users have the right to expect that personal information held about them is not accessed, used or disclosed improperly
- The same duty of confidentiality applies to personal information about staff, with the exception of names and job titles. Information about Directors, which is published and therefore is a matter of public record, is also excepted
- All staff have the individual responsibility for ensuring that they conform to the Caldicott principles, Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and Article 8 Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998
- Staff must not inappropriately access, misuse or share any information or allow others to do so. Staff are personally liable for deliberate or reckless breaches of the DPA 2018 and may be liable to disciplinary action and/or prosecution
- Any personal information given or received in confidence for one purpose may not generally be used for a different purpose, or passed to anyone else without the consent of the provider of the information

4.3 The Position of First Choice Home Care on Confidentiality

- We will share with Service Users, their families and their Care Workers, as far as the law allows, the information they want or need to know about their health, care and ongoing treatment sensitively and in a way they can understand
- Confidential information will not be used for a different purpose or passed on to anyone else without the consent of the information provider
- There may be occasions when it can be detrimental to the Service User or to another individual if this principle is strictly adhered to
- There is a recognition that breaches of confidence are often unintentional. They are often caused by staff conversations being overheard, by files being left unattended, or by poor computer security. However, the consequences can be equally serious for all concerned
- First Choice Home Care will ensure that personally identifiable information will always be held securely and, when used, treated with respect. This rule will apply regardless of where the information is held
- We respect that a person's right to privacy and confidentiality continues after they have died
- All information regarding the Service Users we support will be treated with respect and integrity
- We will be transparent in our approach to ensure that anyone associated with First Choice Home Care (whether Service User or staff or visitor) is fully aware of how, what, when, who and why we share any information about them and source their agreement before doing so

4.4 All relevant staff will be bound by their professional code of practice issued by their relevant licensing body, such as the General Medical Council, The Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. Care Workers will follow the Skills for Care Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England.

4.5 All staff must sign a confidentiality agreement as part of their contract of employment (a template can be found within the forms section of this policy). The confidentiality agreement also extends to agency and contract workers.

4.6 Responsibilities - Registered Manager

- Ensuring that systems and processes are in place for the security of records and they are reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose
- Ensuring that all staff understand this policy at the start of employment and that its importance is



reiterated during supervision or team meetings

- Ensuring that staff have received the appropriate training and are competent in their role
- Reviewing, monitoring and auditing practice within First Choice Home Care to ensure that staff remain knowledgeable
- Acting on any breaches in confidentiality in a timely manner and notifying the appropriate bodies
- Ensuring that confidentiality rules are never used as a barrier to sharing appropriate information and fulfilling Duty of Candour obligations

4.7 Responsibilities - All staff will ensure the following:

- All information that is received is **effectively protected** against improper disclosure when it is **received, stored, transmitted and disposed of**
- Confidential information is only accessed if it is appropriate to the job being undertaken
- Every effort is made to ensure that Service Users understand how information about them will be used before they supply any confidential information
- When Service Users give consent to disclosure of information about them, they understand what will be disclosed, the reasons for disclosure and the likely consequence/s
- Service Users understand when information about them is likely to be disclosed to others and that they have the opportunity to withhold their permission
- If disclosing information outside the team that may have personal consequences for Service User, that consent is obtained from the Service User
- If the Service User withholds consent, or if consent cannot be obtained for whatever reason, disclosures may be made only where:
 - **They can be justified in the public interest (usually where disclosure is essential to protect the Service User or someone else from the risk of significant harm)**
 - **They are required by law or by order of a court**
- If required to disclose confidential information, staff will only release as much information as is necessary for the purpose
- The person(s) to whom information is disclosed understands that it is given to them in confidence which they must respect
- When disclosing confidential information, staff must be prepared to explain and justify the decision. Where there are doubts, they will discuss them with Miss Hannah Brock
- Queries concerning this policy will be brought to the attention of Miss Hannah Brock
- During the induction period for new staff, they will be made aware of this policy and their individual responsibilities

4.8 Coronavirus

During unprecedented times, such as the coronavirus pandemic, First Choice Home Care recognises that information may need to be shared quickly, or ways of working adapted. Where this is required, it will be done in line with data protection requirements.



5. Procedure

5.1 First Choice Home Care will detail with transparency how confidentiality is managed with Service Users, employees and others at the earliest opportunity and seek their agreement, e.g. through existing systems such as recruitment and the pre-assessment process.

Staff can refer to the Fair Processing Notice Templates and the Fair Processing Notice Policy and Procedure for further information that details how information is processed within First Choice Home Care.

5.2 Sharing Information with Other Health and Social Care Professionals

Information sharing between partners directly involved in a Service User's Care, and for the purpose of providing that Care, is essential to good practice.

Consent from the Service User for information sharing must be recorded following a discussion with the Service User or, in the absence of capacity to consent, their designated other.

The principles of sharing information are:

- Only information that needs to be shared
- Only with those who have a clear need to know
- There is a lawful basis for sharing information

5.3 General Principles of Confidentiality - Staff will:

- Understand and follow the Caldicott Principles as detailed within the Forms section of this policy
- Be aware that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately
- Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared and will seek their agreement unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so
- Seek advice from Miss Hannah Brock, if they are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person, where possible
- Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. Staff may still share information without consent if, in their judgment, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest
- Consider safety and wellbeing: Staff must base information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the person and others who may be affected by their actions
- **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure:** Ensure that the information shared is necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely
- Staff must keep a record of any decision and the reasons for it (to include what has been shared, with whom and for what purpose), and for the decision not to share

5.4 Maintaining Confidentiality

- All information regarding the people we support will be treated with respect and integrity
- In general, no information may be disclosed either verbally or in writing to other persons without the Service User's consent. This includes family, friends and private carers, and other professionals
- If in doubt, you can consult the Line Manager or Miss Hannah Brock, Registered Manager
- Conversations relating to confidential matters affecting Service Users must not take place anywhere they may be overheard by others, i.e. in public places - such as supermarkets, public transport, open plan areas of the office, during training or group supervision where other staff not involved in the Service User's care are present
- Written records and correspondence must be kept securely at all times when not being used by a member of staff. Timesheets, rotas, etc. must not be left in an unattended vehicle
- Rotas must not contain key safe or door entry codes with Service User's name and address
- Staff must ensure their copy of the rota is confidentially destroyed. It must not be placed in household recycling
- Staff must not disclose any information that is confidential or that, if it were made public, may lead to a



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breakdown in the trust and confidence that the Service User and their families have in First Choice Home Care

- Staff must not pass on any information or make comment to the press or other media. Media enquiries should be referred to the person responsible for handling any media enquiries

5.5 Safeguarding, The Care Act and Confidentiality

Where safeguarding issues arise and in order to fully understand what has gone wrong, Safeguarding Adult Boards may ask for information to be shared. Decisions about who needs to know and what needs to be known should be taken on a case-by-case basis, within locally agreed policies and the constraints of the legal framework. However:

- Staff must verify the identity of the person requesting the information whilst establishing if it can be anonymised (refer to 5.8)
- Information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis when it is in the interests of the adult
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy
- Informed consent should be obtained, but if this is not possible and other adults are at risk of abuse or neglect, it may be necessary to override the requirement
- It is inappropriate for First Choice Home Care to give assurances of absolute confidentiality in cases where there are concerns about abuse, particularly in those situations when other adults may be at risk

5.6 Rights of All Service Users

All Service Users may view personal information we hold about them. Local and health authorities are not required to give access to information that is 'hurtful' or 'that would breach the confidentiality of another Service User'. The policy at First Choice Home Care is to record information in a way that, as far as possible, avoids a need for this exclusion. If a Service User believes their right to confidentiality is either being breached or undermined, they must have access to the complaints procedure at First Choice Home Care.

Staff must refer to the Subject Access Requests Policy and Procedure for further details.

5.7 Rights of All Staff

All staff may view personal information held by First Choice Home Care that relates to them, by applying in writing to their Line Manager or Registered Manager, Miss Hannah Brock.

5.8 Data Security and Quality

- Any record that contains information about an individual must remain confidential unless it is in the public domain. Any records will be factual and will not include the personal opinions of the person writing the records. Staff can refer to **AB19 - Record Keeping Policy and Procedure** for further details
- Reproduction of information relating to a Service User (e.g. photocopying documents) will only be done with the consent of the Service User
- Confidential information to be posted must be marked 'Private & Confidential, for attention of the addressee only', and sent recorded/special delivery

Staff can refer to the guidance contained in the Forms section of this policy for best practice and requirements for data security. However, as a minimum:

- Information held within First Choice Home Care will not be shown to unauthorised individuals or be left where authorised personnel may access them. All records will be kept in a lockable cabinet in a lockable office, with restricted access
- All written records will be kept securely and only disposed of by shredding, after appropriate timescales. Staff must take care when recording personal identifiable information into personal notebooks or paper during shift handover and ensure the safekeeping and destruction of the information
- Written information also relates to key safe numbers and Staff Rotas. Staff must be only provided with key safe numbers if they are directly providing care for the Service User and staff must follow the key safe number policy. Key safe numbers must not be recorded on Service User records for use outside the office or on rotas supplied to staff. Staff must ensure that if they record Service User information to support the delivery of care (e.g. a request to cover an unplanned absence) that the information is recorded safely and securely, and that the information is safely destroyed after use
- Any rotas must be returned to the office for confidential disposal



- Any employee who breaches this policy may be subject to disciplinary procedures

5.9 Social Media

Staff are not permitted to discuss the people who use our services, other employees past or present, or First Choice Home Care on any social networking site, as this may breach confidentiality and bring First Choice Home Care into disrepute. Staff must also be aware that this applies to taking and posting photographs of Service Users.

5.10 Mental Capacity and Confidentiality

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 applies to adults without capacity, and further details about the disclosure of confidential information about a Service User lacking capacity can be found in the Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice.

5.11 Anonymisation and Pseudonymisation Considerations

Anonymisation

Anonymised information (i.e. where personal information is removed and both the giver and the receiver are unable to identify the Service User) is not confidential and may be used outside of data protection legislation. However, staff should be aware that information which contains small numbers of person identifiable information may lead to identification. For this reason, all disclosure of anonymised information must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. First Choice Home Care will seek to anonymise collective data about individuals within the service.

Pseudonymisation

Pseudonymisation is the practice of removing and replacing actual data with a coded reference (a 'key'). First Choice Home Care will consider this practice where the use of the data needs to relate to individual records, but also needs to retain security and privacy for that individual. There is a higher privacy risk and security risk of the key system as the data will not truly be anonymised.

Personal data that has been pseudonymised can fall within the scope of data protection legislation, depending on how difficult it is to assign it to a particular individual.

Further information can be found within the ICO [Anonymisation Code of Practice](#).

5.12 First Choice Home Care Confidentiality

Suppliers

Staff must extend the principles of confidentiality when considering First Choice Home Care sensitive information and the protection of any commercial data.

Staff and/or external suppliers will ensure that information such as suppliers' prices, performance and costs are not disclosed to other suppliers or unauthorised persons. First Choice Home Care could consider requesting that suppliers sign a confidentiality agreement in order to protect the data of First Choice Home Care.

If there are any queries about how to support commercially sensitive information, these must be discussed with Miss Hannah Brock.

Meetings

First Choice Home Care has a right to have confidential meetings where information is discussed and then held securely and confidentially. Information held will be in line with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Complaints and Investigations

Complaints and investigations are treated confidentially and remain so, unless there is a legal requirement to release information.

Media

Staff must not pass on any information, or make comment, to the press or other media. Media enquiries must be referred to the person responsible for handling any media enquiries.

5.13 Confidentiality Breach

Unauthorised access, use or disclosure may be in breach of the DPA 2018, the Human Rights Act, and/or breach the policies of First Choice Home Care and may lead to disciplinary action.

Where there has been a breach in confidentiality, this will be recorded on an incident form at First Choice Home Care and reported to Miss Hannah Brock.

Significant breaches will be reported to Mrs Lynn Shea so that reporting to the relevant regulatory, professional bodies and the ICO is considered.

Breaches will be monitored by Miss Hannah Brock, reflected on with lessons learned and will form part of the quality assurance programme for First Choice Home Care.

Staff will refer people to the Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Policy and Procedure at First Choice Home Care.



6. Definitions

6.1 Data Protection Act 2018

- The Data Protection Act 2018 is a United Kingdom Act of Parliament that updates data protection laws in the UK. It sits alongside the General Data Protection Regulation and implements the EU's Law Enforcement Directive

6.2 The Caldicott Report 1997

- Provides guidance to the NHS and adult social care records on the use and protection of personal confidential data and emphasises the need for controls over the availability of such information and access to it
- It makes a series of recommendations which led to the requirement for all NHS organisations (and adult social care records from the year 2000) to appoint a Caldicott Guardian who is responsible for compliance with the 6 (original) Caldicott confidentiality principles

6.3 Common Law Duty of Confidentiality

- Prohibits use and disclosure of information, provided in confidence unless there is a statutory requirement or court order to do so
- Such information may be disclosed only for purposes that the subject has been informed about and has consented to, provided also that there are no statutory restrictions on disclosure
- This duty is not absolute, but should only be overridden if the holder of the information can justify disclosure as being in the public interest, for example, to protect the vital interests of the data subjects or another person, or for the prevention or detection of a serious crime

6.4 Safe Haven

- A Safe Haven is a term used to explain an agreed set of arrangements that are in place in an organisation to ensure that confidential identifiable information (e.g. patients and staff information) can be communicated safely and securely
- It is a recognised phrase within the NHS but has relevant underlying principles for all community-based services

6.5 Personal Information

- Personal information is information which can identify a person – in which the person is the focus of the information and which links that individual to details which would be regarded as private, e.g. name and private address, name and home telephone number, etc.

6.6 Sensitive Personal Information

- Sensitive personal information is where the personal information contains details of that person's:
 - Health or physical condition
 - Sexual life
 - Ethnic origin
 - Religious beliefs
 - Political views
 - Criminal convictions

6.7 Business Sensitive Information

- Information that if disclosed could harm or damage the reputation or image of an organisation

6.8 Public Interest

- Exceptional circumstances that justify overruling the right of an individual to confidentiality in order to serve a broader societal interest
- Decisions about the public interest are complex and must take account of both the potential harm that disclosure may cause and the interest of society in the continued provision of confidential services
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act (Whistleblowing) has more information about this

6.9 Consistent Identifier

- The Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015 includes a requirement for health and adult social care organisations to use a **consistent identifier** (the NHS Number) for all data sharing associated with or facilitating care for an individual



- The NHS Number is the national, unique identifier that makes it possible to share patient and Service User information across the NHS and social care safely, efficiently and accurately

6.10 Confidentiality

- Confidentiality means that professionals should not tell other people personal things about a Service User unless the Service User says they can, or if it is absolutely necessary

6.11 Statutory Duty to Disclose

- There are Acts of Parliament which require the production of confidential information
 - Prevention of Terrorism Acts
 - Road Traffic Act
 - Public Health Acts
 - Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
 - Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- It is essential that there is good justification to disclose confidential information when relying upon an Act of Parliament. Public Health legislation requires the reporting of notifiable diseases



Key Facts - Professionals

Professionals providing this service should be aware of the following:

- Professionals can only tell other people your personal information if the Service User says they can or if they have to
- Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely
- Professionals can share information without a Service User's consent if there is a risk of serious harm to a Service User or other individual, or there is a risk of a serious crime
- When someone dies, confidentiality still applies



Key Facts - People affected by the service

People affected by this service should be aware of the following:

- Where possible, staff will obtain your consent to share information about you
- If you are unable to consent to share information because you lack mental capacity, staff will need to follow the Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice
- Every person has a right to confidentiality; however, staff may have to share information about you in your best interests



Further Reading

As well as the information in the 'underpinning knowledge' section of the review sheet we recommend that you add to your understanding in this policy area by considering the following materials:

Health and Social Care Information Centre - A Guide to Confidentiality in Health and Social Care v1.1 September 2013:

<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/media/12822/Guide-to-confidentiality-in-health-and-social-care/pdf/HSCIC-guide-to-confidentiality.pdf>

Information: To Share or not to Share - The Information Governance Review March 2013 Fiona Caldicott - Department of Health:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-information-governance-review>

Care Quality Commission - Using surveillance Information for providers of health and social care on using surveillance to monitor services December 2014 (updated with new regulations in June 2015):

https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20150617_provider_surveillance_information.pdf

Related Policies

- CCTV and Use of Hidden Cameras Policy and Procedure
- Professional Relationships Policy and Procedure
- Obtaining Medical Reports Policy and Procedure
- Access to Information Policy and Procedure
- Data Security Breach Policy and Procedure
- Staff Handbook
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
- Social Networking Policy and Procedure
- Child Protection Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure



Outstanding Practice

To be 'outstanding' in this policy area you could provide evidence that:

- Staff treat Service Users with kindness and respect, and maintain Service User information confidentiality
- Each person's privacy needs and expectations should be identified, recorded, and met as far as is reasonably possible
- Staff are registered as Dignity Champions and can evidence they follow the 'Dignity Dos'
- Robust systems and Governance process ensure staff and Service User confidentiality is maintained at all times
- The wide understanding of the policy is enabled by proactive use of the QCS App



Forms

The following forms are included as part of this policy:

Title of form	When would the form be used?	Created by
Staff Confidentiality Agreement - CR33	To ensure staff understand their obligations with regards to confidentiality.	QCS
Caldicott Principles - CR33	To offer guidance to staff around the 7 principles.	QCS
Data Security Guidance - CR33	To detail the requirements for safe and secure records management.	QCS

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This agreement is provided to clarify the responsibilities of those employed at First Choice Home Care in respect of maintaining confidential information gathered by First Choice Home Care in the course of its work.

Queries and questions relating to this duty should be addressed to either the:

- Registered Manager
- Data Protection Adviser & HO Administrator who is Mrs Lynn Shea

All information given by Service Users to staff is given on the understanding that it will be used solely to providing them with Care. It is the duty of First Choice Home Care to ensure that the confidentiality of that information is maintained within the boundaries of the law and is not divulged without the consent of the Service User.

In the course of your work at First Choice Home Care, you will have access to person identifiable, confidential data concerning the medical or personal affairs of:

- Service Users
- First Choice Home Care team
- Associated health and care professionals

Unless acting on First Choice Home Care policy, or following the direct instructions of First Choice Home Care Ltd, or Registered Manager such information must not be divulged or discussed, except in the performance of your normal duties. Breach of confidence, including the improper passing of computer data, may result in disciplinary action, your dismissal, and civil action against you for damages.

You must ensure that all records, including computer screens and computer-generated records or paper records of staff or Service User data are never left where unauthorised persons can view them.

Computer screens must always be cleared when left unattended and you must ensure you log out of computer systems, removing your password. All passwords to the systems at First Choice Home Care must be kept confidential.

No unauthorised use of the Internet or email is allowed.

Information concerning Service Users or team members is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to unauthorised persons. This obligation continues without end, during and after your employment at First Choice Home Care. Disclosures of confidential information or disclosures of any data of a personal nature can result in prosecution for an offence under the Data Protection Act 2018.

I have read, understand and agree to the terms and conditions set out above:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

The Caldicott Principles revised 2013 are:

Principle 1 - Justify the purpose(s) for using confidential information

Every proposed use or transfer of personal confidential data within or from an organisation should be clearly defined, scrutinised and documented, with continuing uses regularly reviewed by an appropriate guardian.

Principle 2 - Don't use personal confidential data unless it is absolutely necessary

Personal confidential data items should not be included unless it is essential for the specified purpose(s) of that flow. The need for patients to be identified should be considered at each stage of satisfying the purpose(s).

Principle 3 - Use the minimum necessary personal confidential data

Where use of personal confidential data is considered to be essential, the inclusion of each individual item of data should be considered and justified so that the minimum amount of personal confidential data is transferred or accessible as is necessary for a given function to be carried out.

Principle 4 - Access to personal confidential data should be on a strict need-to-know basis

Only those individuals who need access to personal confidential data should have access to it, and they should only have access to the data items that they need to see. This may mean introducing access controls or splitting data flows where one data flow is used for several purposes.

Principle 5 - Everyone with access to personal confidential data should be aware of their responsibilities

Action should be taken to ensure that those handling personal confidential data - both clinical and non-clinical staff - are made fully aware of their responsibilities and obligations to respect patient confidentiality.

Principle 6 - Comply with the law

Every use of personal confidential data must be lawful. Someone in each organisation handling personal confidential data should be responsible for ensuring that the organisation complies with legal requirements.

In April 2013, Dame Fiona Caldicott reported on her second review of information governance, her report "Information: To Share or Not to Share? The Information Governance Review", informally known as the "Caldicott2 Review", introduced a new 7th Caldicott Principle.

Principle 7 - The duty to share information can be as important as the duty to protect patient confidentiality

Health and social care professionals should have the confidence to share information in the best interests of their patients within the framework set out by these principles. They should be supported by the policies of their employers, regulators and professional bodies.

Physical Location and Security

- Unauthorised staff or members of the public must not be able to gain access to person identifiable information
- Person identifiable information will be held in rooms that conform to health and safety standards in terms of fire safety and safety from flood, theft or environmental damage
- Paper records containing person identifiable information must be stored in locked filing cabinets
- Computers must not be left on view or be accessible by unauthorised staff. Computers must have a secure screen saver function and be switched off when not in use
- Equipment such as fax machines must have a password and be switched off outside office hours if situated in a non-secure area

Fax Machines

Fax machines must only be used to transfer personal information where it is absolutely necessary to do so. The following rules must apply:

- Ensure it is sited in an area that is restricted to those who need to access the information
- The fax is sent to a safe location where only staff who have a legitimate right to view the information can access it
- The sender is certain that the correct person will receive it and that the fax number is correct
- Notify the recipient when you are sending the fax and ask them to acknowledge receipt
- The confirmation of receipt should be checked to ensure the fax has been transmitted to the intended recipient. Where possible, this should be attached to the original document
- Where possible, the NHS number should be used for identification in preference to the Service User's name and address
- Care is taken in dialling the correct number
- Confidential faxes are not left lying around for unauthorised staff to see
- Only the minimum amount of personal information should be sent
- Use a fax cover sheet that contains a confidentiality statement (example - "This fax is confidential and is intended only for the person to whom it is addressed. If you have received this fax in error, please immediately notify us by telephone on the number above and return the message to us by post. If the reader of this fax is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any distribution or copying of the message is strictly prohibited")
- Frequently used numbers should be programmed into the fax machine 'memory dial' facility. This will minimise the risk of dialling incorrect numbers
- If you receive a call requesting that confidential information be sent via fax, always call the requestor back to confirm the caller's identity using an independent number source
- Always seek advice from your line manager if you are unsure whether or not to send any information via fax
- If it is highly sensitive, ensure that someone is at the receiving end waiting for it
- Ensure that only authorised staff handle confidential information
- If you receive faxes that contain personal information, store them in a secure environment
- Fax machines should be turned off out of hours

Post and Paper Documents

- Incoming mail should be opened away from public areas
- Outgoing mail (both internal and external) should be sealed securely and marked 'Private and Confidential' if it contains person identifiable information. Where possible, send post to a named person
- When sending documents by external post or courier, use a "signed for" delivery service. Use appropriate stationery, such as reinforced envelopes or document wallets when necessary. Check that the address is typed or written clearly in indelible ink
- Send documents only to known, named, authorised personnel marked "Confidential" and use a "signed for" or "recorded delivery" service
- Confidential information must not be left unattended at any time
- Information should be shredded when it is no longer required (e.g. post-it notes, messages)
- Staff should ensure that they comply with the guidance on the retention of confidential information

PCs, Laptops and Memory Sticks

- Do not share logins and passwords with anyone
- Computer screens must not be left on view so that members of the general public or staff who do not have a justified need to view the information can see personal data
- PCs or laptops should be locked using the "control, alt, delete" function or switched off when you are away from your desk for any length of time
- Information should be held on the network servers of First Choice Home Care, not stored on local hard drives or removable media
- Any information must not be saved or copied into any PC or media that is "outside First Choice Home Care"
- The number of staff with access privileges should be kept to a minimum (e.g. administrator access to the system)

Emails

- The email system of First Choice Home Care should not be used to transfer commercially sensitive or personal identifiable information outside of First Choice Home Care unless this information is encrypted
- All person identifiable information sent by email must be sent securely
- Email disclaimers should be used appropriately. Remember, adding a disclaimer routinely to all emails may make them meaningless through overuse (example - "Privileged and/or confidential information may be contained in this message. If you are not the original addressee indicated in this message (or responsible for delivery of the message to such person) you may not copy or deliver this message to anyone. In such cases please delete this message and notify us immediately. Opinions, conclusions and other information expressed in this message are not given or endorsed by my employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised representative independently of this message")

Telephone Calls

- Do not make confidential telephone calls where you can be overheard (e.g. Reception)
- When you receive a call, check to ensure that you are speaking to the correct person, ring back (where possible) to confirm someone's identity

Remote Working

- There may be times when staff need to work from another location or whilst travelling. This may mean that staff carry confidential information either on a laptop or in paper form
- Taking home or removing paper records that contain person identifiable or confidential information from the premises is discouraged
- Where there is no choice, staff must minimise the amount of person identifiable information that is taken away and ensure the following: information is carried in a sealed non-transparent container (e.g. a windowless envelope, bag etc) and it is kept out of sight whilst being transported
- To ensure safety, staff must keep such records on their person at all times when travelling and ensure that they are kept in a secure place if they take them to another location
- Confidential information must be safeguarded at all times and kept in lockable locations
- When away from the premises, all policies and procedures remain relevant
- Staff must not use or store person identifiable or confidential information on a privately owned computer or device

Summary of Confidentiality Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- Do safeguard the confidentiality of all person identifiable or confidential information that you come into contact with. This is a statutory obligation on everyone working on or behalf of First Choice Home Care
- Do clear your desk at the end of each day, keeping all non-digital records containing person identifiable or confidential information in recognised filing and storage places that are locked at times when access is not directly controlled or supervised
- Do switch off computers with access to person identifiable or business confidential information, or put them into a password-protected mode if you leave your desk for any length of time
- Do ensure that you cannot be overheard when discussing confidential matters
- Do challenge and verify, where necessary, the identity of any person who is making a request for person identifiable or confidential information and ensure that they have a need to know
- Do share only the minimum information necessary
- Do transfer person identifiable or confidential information securely
- Do seek advice if you need to share Service User/person identifiable information without the consent of the Service User's/identifiable person's consent, and record the decision and any action taken
- Do report any actual or suspected breaches of confidentiality
- Do participate in induction, training and awareness raising sessions on confidentiality issues

Don'ts

- Don't share passwords or leave them lying around for others to see
- Don't share information without the consent of the person to which the information relates, unless there are statutory grounds to do so
- Don't use person identifiable information unless absolutely necessary, anonymise the information where possible
- Don't collect, hold or process more information than you need, and do not keep it for longer than necessary