

Best Foot Forward – Confidentiality Policy

Author: Andrew Russell

Approved By: Bethany Russell

Date Approved: October 2025

Assigned Review Period: 1 Year

Next Review Due: October 2026

Purpose: To ensure that all staff, volunteers and representatives of Best Foot Forward understand their responsibilities regarding confidentiality, information sharing and safeguarding, and to protect the privacy, safety and well-being of all young people, parents/carers and staff.

Rationale

- The safety, well-being and protection of our young people are the paramount considerations in all decisions staff at this organisation make about confidentiality. Appropriate sharing of information between staff is essential to ensure young people's well-being and safety.
- Trust is key to enabling young people, staff, and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the organisation. Information sharing is minimised and only done when necessary to ensure safety and support.
- Young people, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality to feel comfortable and safe in discussing personal issues and concerns.
- Our approach to confidentiality is open, consistent, and transparent. Everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within Best Foot Forward.
- Everyone in the organisation must understand that no one can offer absolute confidentiality and that limits exist to ensure the safety and welfare of others.

Definition of Confidentiality

- Confidentiality refers to information shared in private with the understanding that it will not be shared further without permission.
- In practice, absolute confidentiality is rarely possible. Staff must balance the duty of care to ensure safety and the need to maintain trust so that young people and staff feel safe to seek help.
- This usually means limited confidentiality – information may be shared with professional colleagues without identifying the individual, except in certain cases related to safeguarding or risk.

- Staff should make clear at the start of any conversation that there are limits to confidentiality. These limits relate to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and others.
- Students will always be informed when confidentiality must be broken, and they will be encouraged to participate in sharing the information themselves whenever possible.

One-to-One Disclosures

- All staff must understand the limits of confidentiality when a young person or parent/carer shares personal information. Staff should be clear about what can and cannot remain confidential.
- Staff must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately of any concerns, regardless of how minor they may seem.
- Serious concerns must be reported immediately so that any necessary intervention can take place early.
- Staff should encourage young people to discuss difficult issues with their parents/carers where appropriate, but the welfare of the young person remains paramount.

The Legal Position

- Staff should never promise absolute confidentiality. Young people should understand that information may need to be shared with parents/carers or safeguarding leads if their safety is at risk.
- No staff member should promise not to share information. The safety and protection of the child must always take precedence.
- Staff should share concerns about a young person professionally and sensitively with the DSL, on a need-to-know basis.

Professional Judgement

- Staff must exercise professional judgement when deciding whether a disclosure can be kept confidential.
- The mentor must consider the best interests of the young person, including both maintaining trust and ensuring safety.
- All staff receive safeguarding training and must follow the Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
- Concerns must always be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Parents/Carers

- Best Foot Forward values partnership with parents and carers. We keep parents informed of their child's progress and any concerns.
- However, a balance must be maintained to allow young people to seek support confidentially when needed.
- When a young person discloses a personal matter, they will be encouraged to share this with their parent/carer themselves.
- The safety and well-being of young people remain the highest priority in all confidentiality decisions.

Complex Cases

- Where uncertainty exists about sharing information, staff should consult the Local Children's Safeguarding Board via the DSL.

Links to Other Policies

- This policy works alongside the Safeguarding Children & Child Protection, Whistleblowing and GDPR & Data Protection Policies.
- These policies are available at www.bestfootforward.org.uk.

When Confidentiality Should Be Broken

- Confidentiality must be broken when the health, safety or well-being of a young person is at risk.
- If uncertain, staff should consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- If the DSL requests updates, staff must comply. There will always be a valid safeguarding reason for this.

Principles of Confidential Discussion

- Ensure discussions occur at an appropriate time and place. Serious concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL.
- Be clear that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a student may hurt themselves, hurt someone else, or is being hurt.
- Avoid leading questions or requiring the young person to repeat distressing information unnecessarily.
- Inform the young person before sharing confidential information and explain why it must be shared.
- Encourage students to speak with their parents/carers whenever possible.

Support for Staff

- Staff are encouraged to seek support and guidance rather than make decisions without sufficient information or training.
- The organisation promotes a culture of mutual support and teamwork to ensure both staff and young people receive the help they need.
- Best Foot Forward has procedures to refer young people to external agencies where needed.

Onward Referral

- In emergency safeguarding cases, the DSL will make an onward referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub within 24 hours.
- All staff must know who the DSL and Deputy DSL are and how to contact them.

Dissemination and Implementation

- This policy is shared with all staff and discussed at Director briefings annually.
- It forms part of the induction process for new staff.