

Confidentiality Policy

2024/2025

The purpose of this policy is to detail the basic standards that volunteers, staff and Advisory Board members should adhere to, and which can be incorporated as part of normal working practice

Statement on Confidentiality

Doorstep Arts will ensure that any sensitive information given will not be passed on except in very rare circumstances where this is necessary to protect a vulnerable person from harm, or to comply with the law.

In such circumstances, the information will only be passed on as permitted in this policy. This must be confirmed with the Director and wherever possible and appropriate the person will be informed that this action has been taken.

Legal context

- The Human Rights Act 1998 guarantees respect for a person's private and family life, home and correspondence.
- The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) concerns personal information, which includes facts and opinions about an individual which might identify them. The DPA ensures that information held about any person cannot be used for purposes other than those for which it was originally supplied, without the person's consent. Exceptions to these Acts are allowed where this is necessary to protect a vulnerable person from harm.
- Some restricted and specific areas of legislation over-ride the Human Rights Act and the Data Protection Act, for example in the area of suspected terrorist activity or over specific safeguarding concerns.
- The Advisory Board and Directors are responsible for all the activities of Doorstep Arts staff and volunteers and may ask for information at any time to ensure that agreed policies are being implemented. Advisory Board members are not entitled to an individual's personal information.

Doorstep Arts will ensure that all volunteers, staff and trustees are issued with this policy and will maintain their signed declaration of confidentiality.

Volunteers should be aware of the remit and contact details for the Child Protection Officer and the Database Administrator to whom they should report any concerns regarding confidentiality. This policy will be reviewed regularly.

Confidentiality in Practice

The vast majority of enquiries can be treated in strict confidence. It is not necessary to inform all enquirers of the confidentiality policy as a matter of course, as to do so may be off-putting to those simply seeking information. However, should the enquirer ask about confidentiality, or indicate that they are about to disclose information of a sensitive and serious nature, they should be made aware of Doorstep Art's policy statement on confidentiality.

No personal details of any member of staff, Doorstep Art's member or volunteer will be disclosed without their agreement.

Exceptions to confidentiality

The only exceptions to complete confidentiality are when:

- The enquirer describes a situation which raises concerns about the safety of a child or vulnerable adult;
- The enquirer is in immediate danger, e.g. suicidal;
- The enquirer discloses information about an alleged crime or discloses information that an alleged crime is going to happen.

In the case of concerns about a child or vulnerable adult in immediate danger, or an enquirer who is in immediate danger themselves, the volunteer must call the police by dialling 999 immediately.

In all other cases of concerns about children or vulnerable adults, the volunteer *must* contact the Safeguarding Officer who will then follow up the case using the correct protocol and will help you decide what course of action to take.

Any information about any crime or criminal activity must be passed on to the police.

Unauthorised breaches of confidentiality

Volunteers who breach these guidelines by communication, dissemination or solicitation of non-essential and/or identifying information about current or former staff, volunteers, members or enquirers in any way other than authorised above will be investigated.

The Board/staff/volunteer will be given every opportunity to state his or her case but Doorstep Arts reserves the right to undergo disciplinary proceedings if it is established that a breach has occurred, for which the volunteer is responsible.

Declaration of Confidentiality

In the course of his or her duties a Board member/volunteer/employee may have access to confidential material about referred families, members of staff or other business. On no account must information relating to individuals or families, including the fact that they have been referred or received a service be divulged to anyone other than authorised persons, for example, professional staff who are concerned directly with the referral process and/or provision of a service to the individual or family.

If a volunteer is in any doubt as to the authority of a person or body asking for information of this nature, he or she must seek advice from the Board to whom he or she is responsible.

Similarly, no information of a personal or confidential nature concerning individual members of staff or other volunteer's should be divulged to anyone without their permission having first being given. Volunteers will be provided with adequate and relevant information about families and individuals on a 'need to know' basis.

Any alleged breach of confidentiality by a volunteer will be investigated. The volunteer will be given every opportunity to state his or her case but Doorstep Arts reserve the right to ask the volunteer to leave if it is established that a breach has occurred, for which the volunteer is responsible.

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