

CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Statement

SVS has access to information concerning many groups and individuals in the city and it is therefore imperative that the strictest confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Information belongs to the person or agency entrusting it to a member of staff or volunteer of SVS. Any information passed on outside of SVS will only be given with the express permission of the person or body which supplied the information unless we are legally obliged to disclose it.

SVS has notified the Data Protection Unit under the Data Protection Act and our Deputy Chief Executive is the appointed Data Controller We endeavour to ensure that all information is stored under their guidelines,

- confidential and sensitive information is kept securely
- it is fairly and lawfully processed
- it is accurate and kept up to date
- it is limited to relevant information and not excessive for its purpose
- it will not be used for any purpose other than that for which it was given.

Responsibility

SVS has a responsibility to ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of Data Protection principles and the need for confidentiality, and that they are aware of specific guidelines that may be developed for specialised areas of work.

All members of staff and volunteers in SVS are responsible for ensuring any information they hold or are party to, is handled in line with SVS policies and the Data Protection Act.

All personal records, whether on paper or on computer are covered by the Data Protection Act and individuals and the organisation have criminal liability if they recklessly disclose personal information. A serious breach would be a disciplinary matter.

Care with Identification

It is accepted that most breaches of confidentiality are accidental rather than deliberate and it is important to remember never to break confidentiality regardless of how the information is received. It is important to recognise that descriptions of individual events and circumstances can lead to identification even when names have not been used.

Discussions

It is accepted that on certain occasions you may need to discuss an issue with other people, your supervisor or a member of the Committee, for example. If this occurs it must be made absolutely clear that all people concerned are bound by confidentiality and that confidential matters must not be discussed outside SVS.

Exceptional circumstances

SVS realises that, on rare occasions, it may be necessary to breach the basic rules of confidentiality. Situations concerning dangers to children or other vulnerable people or physical risks to other citizens, for example, may necessitate a breach of confidentiality. Where a staff member or volunteer feels that a matter is sufficiently serious she/he must report it to the Chief Executive/ Deputy or line manager. They will make a decision as appropriate in line with SVS Policies and depending on the nature of the issue. It may also be necessary to consult with the Chair or Vice Chair of the SVS Executive Committee before a decision is made on the action to be taken.

Individual Access

Individuals have the right to access information held on them within the organisation with reasonable notice. A small charge may be made if a cost is involved e.g. photocopying, archive access, or staff time.

If a member of staff wishes to access their personnel records they should ask the HR Advisor or Deputy Chief Executive. References will only be disclosed if permission has been given by the referee.

Statistical Information

Any statistical information or research carried out must be presented so that no individual can be identified unless clear prior permission has been given. An explanation of how the information will be used must be given to any person agreeing to be identified.

Other related policies for cross reference:

- Child Protection Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- IT Policy
- Reference Policy
- Role of SVS staff in Recruitment Process
- Secure Storage & Handling of Disclosure Information
- Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy