

## CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT FOR THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

### Confidentiality Statement

The Counselling Service at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David is committed to providing a professional service with a high degree of confidentiality.

Consequently, subject to the rare exceptions detailed on *The Counselling Service and Data Protection* sheet, nothing disclosed to Counsellors will be passed on to anyone outside the Service without the client's permission.

### What Is Meant By Confidentiality?

Confidentiality covers not only what is said in a session, but also the fact that a client has used the Service. Students are often referred to the Service by a concerned tutor or Head of School. The Counsellors do not routinely report back in such cases. If asked by the person who made the referral whether a student has attended counselling, a brief acknowledgement may be made, particularly if it is viewed to be in the interest of the student (and/or the University). Such information is not defined by the Data Protection Act 1998 as "sensitive personal data".

### "Sensitive Personal Data"

Counselling Service records may contain sensitive personal data and therefore the client's permission is requested for notes to be made. Ideally this happens before counselling commences, but it may take place at the end of the first session, especially if the client arrives in a state of emotional distress. Clients will be provided with a copy of the document entitled *The Counselling Service and Data Protection* and asked for a signature to confirm their consent.

If the client does not want any data to be recorded, the Counsellor has two options:

1. Explain that the Service cannot be provided without consent because note taking is a fundamental part of the Service. In this case, information about alternative counselling and support agencies will be provided.
2. Offer the client one initial session and at the end of this session explain why the Counselling Service needs consent to proceed. If consent is still refused, no further sessions will be offered. A record that the client has attended may be retained without explicit consent as this is not sensitive data.

## **Appeals Procedures/Disciplinary Committees**

The Counsellor will always endeavour to obtain the client's explicit consent for the release of information to appeals or disciplinary committees, or in other academic situations (e.g. whether a student is in a fit state emotionally to undertake an examination or assessment). Explicit consent is not required if exceptional circumstances apply, for example if the Counsellor believes the client, or a third party, or property is at risk of harm or damage if evidence is not supplied.

## **Operating Guidelines**

The Counselling Service aims to offer best practice and to work within the Ethical Framework of the *British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*. The rooms used for counselling are in a relatively private location, and each Counsellor's notes are stored in a separate, lockable filing cabinet. Manual data that no longer needs to be kept is destroyed by shredding. Staff who make appointments for the Counsellors do so with due respect for confidentiality. Confidentiality is maintained subject to the situations described in the paragraph entitled "Confidentiality" on *The Counselling Service and Data Protection* sheet. This statement is intended to be read in conjunction with that document.

*Policy prepared by Jean Harris, Counsellor, August 2004*

*Reviewed and updated by Jean Harris, Counsellor, August 2007*

*& August 2010*

*& August 2014*

*& June 2015*