

## Confidentiality Policy

Little Hiccups recognises that colleagues (Committee, volunteers, contractors) gain information about individuals, families and organisations during the course of their work or activities. In most cases such information will not be stated as confidential and colleagues may have to exercise common sense and discretion in identifying whether information is expected to be confidential. This policy aims to give guidance but if in doubt, seek advice from the relevant Committee person. This is the Committee member relevant to the query. For example, Safeguarding, Data Protection. If not certain, the Secretary will be able to guide and advise who would be the best to seek advice from.

### Confidential Issues may include:

- Child details - Including additional needs, allergies and use of services
- Parent details - Including emergency contact and use of services
- Little Hiccups working practices and policies
- Little Hiccups financial dealings
- Colleague details

### General Principles

- Ensuring that Colleagues inductions include an awareness of the importance of confidentiality.
- Colleagues are aware that information could be confidential and should only share information with the relevant committee member in order to plan services, discuss issues and seek advice.
- Gaining parental permission for any photographs of the children to be used by Little Hiccups.
- Colleagues will avoid exchanging personal information or comments about individuals with whom they have a professional relationship. This includes the families in our services.
- Talking about the private life of a colleague or a Little Hiccups family is to be avoided at all times, unless the individual in question has instigated the conversation.
- Ensuring that Colleagues have a professional relationship with all families and don't become too familiar with particular families.
- Colleagues will avoid talking about organisations or individuals in social settings and are aware of Little Hiccups' Social Media Policy.
- Colleagues will not disclose to anyone, other than a relevant Committee member, any information considered sensitive, personal, financial or private without the knowledge or consent of the individual.



- There may be circumstances where colleagues would want to discuss difficult situations with each other to gain a wider perspective on how to approach a problem. Consent must be sought from the relevant Committee member before discussing the situation, unless the colleague is convinced beyond doubt that the Little Hiccups would not object to this. Alternatively, a discussion may take place with names or identifying information remaining confidential.
- Where there is a legal duty on Little Hiccups to disclose information, the person to whom the confidentiality is owed will be informed that disclosure has or will be made.

## Why information is held

- Most information held by Little Hiccups relates to individuals, voluntary and community organisations, self-help groups, volunteers, contractors, trustees or services which support or fund them.
- Information is kept to enable Little Hiccups' colleagues to understand the history and activities of individuals or organisations in order to deliver the most appropriate services.
- Little Hiccups has a role in organising events and services and may need to share information relevant to pertinent to this except where the individual expressly requests that the details remain confidential.
- Information about ethnicity and disability of users is kept for the purposes of ensuring eligibility to use our services, for our volunteers in relation to our equal opportunities policy and also for reporting back to funders if required.

## Access to information

- Information is confidential to Little Hiccups as an organisation and may be passed to colleagues to ensure the best quality service for users.
- Where information is sensitive, i.e. it involves disputes or legal issues; it will be confidential to the colleague dealing with the case and the relevant Committee members. Such information should be clearly labelled 'Confidential' and should state the names of the colleagues entitled to access the information and the name of the individual or group who may request access to the information.
- Colleagues will not withhold information from the relevant Committee member unless it is purely personal.
- Users may have sight of Little Hiccups records held in their name or that of their organisation. The request must be in writing to the Data Protection Officer on the Little Hiccups Committee giving 40 days notice for access to records and 21 days to provide a reply to an access to information request notice and be signed by the individual, or in the case of an Little Hiccups's records, by the Chair. Sensitive information will only be made available to the person or organisation named on the file.
- Colleagues may have sight of their personnel records by giving 14 days' notice in writing to the Data Protection Officer on the Little Hiccups Committee.
- When photocopying or working on confidential documents, colleagues must ensure people passing do not see them. This also applies to information on computer screens.

## Storing information



- General non-confidential information about organisations is kept on the Cloud with open access to all Little Hiccups Committee
- Personnel information on colleagues working within Little Hiccups will be stored on the cloud and will be accessible to the Committee and a need to know basis such as In an emergency situation.
- Sensitive information such as use of the Counselling Service is accessible only to the relevant colleagues.

## Duty to disclose information

- There is a legal duty to disclose some information including:
  - Child abuse will be reported to the Social Services Department
  - Drug trafficking, money laundering or acts of terrorism will be disclosed to the police.
  - In addition colleagues believing an illegal act has taken place, or that a user is at risk of harming themselves or others, must report this to the Safeguarding Officers on the Little Hiccups Committee who will report it to the appropriate authorities.
  - Users should be informed of this disclosure.

## Disclosures

- Little Hiccups complies fully with the DBS Code of practice (E File) regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information.
- Disclosure information is always kept separately from an applicant's personnel file in secure storage with access limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties. It is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.
- Documents will be kept for a year and then destroyed by secure means. Photocopies will not be kept. However, Little Hiccups may keep a record of the date of issue of a Disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of Disclosure requested, the position for which the Disclosure was requested, the unique reference number of the Disclosure and the details of the recruitment decision taken.

## Data Protection Act

- Information about individuals, whether on computer or on paper, falls within the scope of the Data Protection Act and must comply with the data protection principles. These are that personal data must be:
  - Obtained and processed fairly and lawfully.
  - Held only for specified purposes.
  - Adequate, relevant and not excessive.
  - Accurate and up to date.
  - Not kept longer than necessary.
  - Processed in accordance with the Act.
  - Kept secure and protected.
  - Not transferred out of Europe.

## Breach of confidentiality



- Colleagues who are dissatisfied with the conduct or actions of other colleagues or Little Hiccups should raise this with the relevant Committee member using the grievance procedure, if necessary, and not discuss their dissatisfaction outside Little Hiccups
- Colleagues accessing unauthorised files or breaching confidentiality may face disciplinary action.

## Whistle blowing

Where there are concerns about the use of Little Hiccups funds, they may refer directly to the Chair or Treasurer outside the usual grievance procedure. All colleagues hold the right to inform one of the Committee if they believe that Little Hiccups is being brought into disrepute by the actions of another colleague or trustee.

Policy agreed by Trustees on:

Signed by Chairperson:

To be reviewed:

