



PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

SURREY

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

August 2010

Partnership with Parents (PwP)

Confidentiality Policy

Introduction

PwP operates a strict code of confidentiality.

Information about parents (including details about their children) should not be passed between PwP and any third party unless parents know and agree to this in advance.

This also applies to arrangements made by PwP for referring parents to other sources of support; if parents do not want their details passed on to anyone else their wishes should be respected.

A balance must be struck between sharing enough information to help safeguard children effectively and preserving the privacy of individuals.

Definitions

Private Information - information about an individual parent or child, their family life or personal relationships that happen to be observed or discovered by a member of PwP.

Confidential information - information about a family that is specifically communicated to PwP orally or in writing, by the parent or anyone else.

Parent – the term ‘parent’ means ‘parent/carer’.

Implementation of the policy

1 **Respect for the parent’s and child’s right to privacy**

- 1.1 Observations or information about the family are not recorded or communicated unless they are directly relevant to the issues under discussion.
- 1.2 Parents are not required to state the nature of their enquiry in front of other people.
- 1.3 Interviews are held in private where they cannot be overheard or observed.

2 The parents right to contact PwP in confidence or anonymously

- 2.1 PwP undertakes not to inform anyone else that the parent has contacted PwP unless the parent agrees.
- 2.2 PwP respects the right of anyone to contact the service anonymously.
- 2.3 PwP responds to general enquiries without requiring detailed information about the child or the family, although details such as the child's name and date of birth will be requested, and Surrey County Council's ethnicity and diversity policy questions will be asked.

3 PwP commitment to principles of confidentiality in its relationship with parents.

- 3.1 All information obtained from families is treated as confidential.
- 3.2 Information is not shared with anyone else unless the parent's permission is obtained.
- 3.3 Please see 7.1

4 Practical arrangements to ensure confidentiality

- 4.1 Office procedures protect the confidentiality of families.
- 4.2 Personal information sent by email is with the parent's permission and highlighted as 'confidential'
- 4.3 All letters related to individual families are marked as 'strictly private and confidential'.
- 4.4 Particular care is taken when sending sensitive information by fax to an 'open' office.
- 4.5 Coded information such as initials and date of birth should be used in electronic and insecure communications.
- 4.6 Identities of families are protected in any information published by PwP.
- 4.7 Records are kept securely and comply with the provision of the Data Protection Act.

5 Information to parents on PwP confidentiality policy

- 6.1 Parents are informed of PwP's confidentiality policy
- 6.2 Parents are informed as to who has access to records
- 6.3 Parents are informed of their rights to see any information held on them or their child.
- 6.4 Parents are informed that information is kept securely and will not be passed on to anyone else without their permission.
- 6.5 Parents who request details of the Service guidelines will be sent a copy of 'Data Protection Act – why do we keep information about you' which is appended to this policy.

7 The priority given to child protection issues at all times

- 7.1 Child protection issues will take priority over any other consideration.

8 Office procedures

- 8.1 All information relating to calls from parents must be recorded on the confidential electronic database, which is used exclusively by PwP.
- 8.2 Documents received by PwP's office will be not be retained unless likely to be required in the future, and will be shredded unless returned to parents at their request.
- 8.4 Computer screens should not be left unattended with confidential information about parents visible.
- 8.5 Correspondence and other documents relating to families should not be left on desks overnight.
- 8.6 PwP records and files will be kept for a maximum of 7 years or until the child/young person attains 25 years of age.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Why do we keep information about you?

- ✓ Many people who provide services you already use, like teachers and doctors, hold information about you.
- ✓ Parent Partnership Service staff also write down and keep certain information and put this on to a computer.
- ✓ The reason for keeping this information is to:
 - ❖ Help us make sure you receive the services you are entitled to
 - ❖ Ensure that if you contact the service again and speak to another member of staff, you do not have to give us the same information again
 - ❖ Help us to identify and build up anonymous statistics about parental concerns and difficulties they are facing.
- ✓ The sort of written information that is kept about you include: name, address, and telephone number, record of all contact you have with the Service.
- ✓ The sort of written information that is kept about your child includes: child's name, date of birth, gender, school, year group and issue requiring support.
- ✓ If you wish to view the information held you could discuss this with the PwP Manager.
- ✓ All information you share is treated confidentially. There may be occasions where it would be beneficial to share information with schools and other services. PwP will discuss this with you and this will only happen with your consent.

The only reason information will be passed on without your permission is if there is a legal requirement or duty for us to do this

In compliance with the Data Protection Act, your information will not be kept longer than necessary.