



Confidentiality Policy for Branch Volunteers

1. Policy Statement

Headway respects the right of the member to the principles of confidentiality. All Headway branch volunteers have a duty to keep confidential any information they learn about their members, either directly or indirectly, and not to disclose it without permission, other than in exceptional circumstances to those outside Headway.

Headway volunteers may discuss individual cases within committee meetings and debrief sessions. This information is on a 'need to know basis'. Information discussed within these closed meetings may include information relating to the client's cognitive impairments, changes in mood or behaviour etc.

Headway has a duty of care to protect volunteers and members and to act in their best interest at all times.

Headway believes that there might be occasions when it could be reasonable to breach confidentiality, including:

- with the member's consent
- when the member is not 'competent' to give consent and to disclose information which is deemed to be in their best interest
- where there is a statutory duty – e.g. drug misuse, or disclosure is required by law or by order of a court
- if the psychological, social or physical well being of a 'minor' might be at risk
- if the person divulges that they are at risk of harming themselves and/or others

Confidentiality should only be broken in exceptional circumstances and should only occur after careful consideration that the action can be **justified**.

Headway branch committee members should consider the safety of all volunteers and members when handling potentially harmful confidential information and if required seek further advice from the Network Support Team or Safeguarding Lead at Headway UK.

2. Related Headway policies:

Safeguarding Policy
Complaints Policy and Procedure
Data Protection Policy



3. Responsibilities

3.1 Committee Members

To ensure that all volunteers and members have access to and are aware of this policy

To ensure that safeguards are in place to protect the interests of the members, volunteers and committee members.

3.2 All volunteers

To adhere to this policy and seek the guidance/ advice from the committee or Headway UK if needed.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all branch committee members and volunteers.

5. Procedure/ Guidance

5.1 Volunteers should:

- Ensure that all files or written information of a confidential nature are stored in a secure manner in a locked filing cabinet and are only accessed by volunteers who have a need and a right to access them
- Ensure that electronic files of a confidential nature are stored in a secure manner i.e. password protected entry to authorised users only.
- Wherever practical or reasonable fill in all records in the presence of and with the co-operation of the member concerned

Rare situations may arise which give rise to exceptions to the duty of confidentiality where confidential information may relate to harm to other members or harm to the person sharing the confidence. In such circumstances Headway reserves the right for staff to break their duty of confidentiality and to take the information to a committee member.

In such rare circumstances:

- the relevant member will be informed of the position, and full details will be discussed with the member
- appropriate notes will be made and these notes will be open to inspection by the member



- the information will only be given to those who absolutely need to know and wider issues of confidentiality of that information will still apply
- the member will be free to make a complaint through the Headway Complaints Procedure.

New and prospective members are made aware of the confidentiality policy.

5.2 Requests for Information

Headway will not provide information to relatives, spouses, friends or advocates without the consent of the individual member concerned. All enquiries for information, even if they are from close relatives, should be referred back to the member or their permission sought before disclosure. Relatives, spouses, friends or advocates need to be made aware of this policy.

5.3 Record Keeping

Files may be kept on members accessing Headway services. Only relevant information must be kept to ensure that the support we offer as an organisation is of the highest quality. The files must only be available to the volunteers that need to use them.