

WEA Learner Confidentiality Policy

Purpose

To ensure that learners' rights to confidentiality of personal information are protected.

Values

The WEA believes that all learners should have the right to expect that personal information held about them will be treated with confidentiality and with respect.

Scope

Personal information may be held about learners at many stages of the learner journey, including:

- At enrolment, for purposes of funding and fee remission
- When disclosing information about a disability or learning need
- During information, advice or guidance sessions or discussions
- When being referred for additional or specialist information or support
- When disclosing financial or residency information for Learner Support Fund applications
- During assessment and review
- During completion of Individual Learning Plans.
- When giving feedback.

Learners have rights under the Data Protection Acts 1984 and 1998. These protect personal information from being used inappropriately. Under the Acts, this information must be destroyed when it ceases to be relevant. Everyone also has a right to see information held about them if they ask.

WEA policy goes beyond the legal requirement and aims to be learner-centred by meeting the standard set within the framework of the National Information, Advice and Guidance Board's "Principles for Coherent Delivery of IAG Services." Transparency regarding use of information held about learners is an important aspect of the policy. .

Confidential information may also be disclosed in some classroom situations, particularly where learners are discussing personal issues - for example, in personal development, community education or family learning programmes. The Confidentiality Policy applies in these situations.

Information submitted to the WEA website is governed by the Privacy Policy available on the website and not by this Policy

Policy

The WEA policy requires that:

- All staff and volunteers maintain a high standard of confidentiality
- All staff and volunteers are made fully aware of the WEA policies on Data Protection, privacy and confidentiality
- All staff and volunteers abide by the principles of these policies, and report any breach in confidentiality or weaknesses in the systems guaranteeing confidentiality
- Where there may be legal requirements for disclosure (e.g. in cases of a suspected criminal offence, where there is a likelihood of harm to an individual, or where child abuse may be suspected) individuals will be told about this at the earliest possible stage.

- Individuals are made aware of:
 1. Their entitlements to confidentiality and transparency
 2. Their right to see any personal information held about them
 3. Their right to refuse to give personal information and any likely impact on them, e.g. Learner Support Fund refusal
 4. How information collected about them is used and stored.

Learners receive information about both confidentiality and about the Learner Code of Conduct in the learner induction leaflet "Service for Learners."

Implementation

All staff and volunteers are responsible for implementing the Confidentiality Policy according to their roles. Breaches of confidentiality or weaknesses in systems should be reported to line managers and action taken through Regional Management Teams or fed back nationally to an appropriate director.

Management

Regionally, Regional Management Teams will be responsible for providing both learners and tutors with information about Data Protection, confidentiality and privacy. Nationally, there is support in terms of:

- The national learner induction leaflet "Services for Learners"
- The Tutor Handbook
- The Policy Bank on the First Class Education Zone
- Advice and support from appropriate Education Strategy Team members.

Monitoring

- By Regional Management Teams
- Through Regional Quality Circles
- Through nationally-collected learner feedback
- Through tutor Course Files.

Links to other policies and documents

This policy is part of a suite of Learner Support Policies defining learner support entitlements. There are particular links with:

- Information, Advice and Guidance Policy and associated Referrals Procedures
- Learner Feedback Policy, Complaints and Appeals Procedures
- Disclosure of Disability Policy
- Privacy Policy (see website)
- The Equality and Diversity Policy.

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