

DRAFT
Devon Parent Partnership Service

Confidentiality Policy

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Throughout this document the word 'parent' is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents, grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers.

1. Confidentiality Statement

Devon Parent Partnership Service (DPPS) is a confidential service for all parents of children with additional educational needs – this means that the principles of confidentiality must operate in all areas of the service and management.

- Nothing will be shared outside DPPS without permission unless it could cause harm
- DPPS can be entrusted with information and will treat it with respect and discretion.

2. Referral

The DPPS operates a self-referral service for parents/carers to contact us direct. We also accept referrals from schools and other agencies as long as they can demonstrate that they have parental consent to refer beforehand.

3. Records of Casework

The ownership of all information and records concerning parents making contact with DPPS lies within DPPS only.

No personal information will be made available to any other persons or agencies without the informed consent of the parent / carer.

The reason for having this information is to help us make sure you receive the services you are entitled to.

Information held about a parent or child by DPPS can be viewed by the parent/carers, that it relates to, by arrangement.

When transporting records DPPS staff will keep information in sight or out of sight and locked in a vehicle.

A. Shared database protocols: EMS, Contact Point

Electronic information held by the DPPS is confidential and held on a custom-designed secure database. DPPS uses the DCC EMS shared database for Children's Services. This includes, for other services, a notification of service use being flagged to those with access to the database, linked to the child or young person's name. This is in line with the anticipated development of Contact Point type arrangements to ensure that concerns about an individual child held by one agency are known to other agencies becoming involved with the child or family. There is an agreed protocol with DCC Children's Department data managers that notification of a parent or carer having been in contact with DPPS will not be made on the shared database unless the parent has specifically given their informed consent that this can happen or where there are child protection issues identified. All paid and voluntary staff making contact with parents about individual casework will explain this protocol, explain the advantages and disadvantages of enabling other agencies to be aware that the parent / carer has been in contact with DPPS, and ask permission for the flagging of entries to be made.

B. Paper Records

Paid and voluntary staff may be asked to take notes when supporting a parent at a meeting or may make notes while supporting an individual parent. Such notes will be offered to parents / carers as a record of the meeting, capturing key points relevant to parent / carer needs. They should not be used as, or be seen to have the status of, formal minutes of a meeting.

All paper records are stored in a locked cabinet, they are accessed only by staff employed to work in the DPPS.

Any paper record copied to the database will be destroyed. DPPS will follow the Devon County Council guidelines for length of storage of paper records. In compliance with the Data Protection Act, information will not be kept longer than is necessary.

4. Information Sharing

Any information that a parent may share with DPPS, other than that which raise child protection issues or civil safety issues, will not be passed to schools, Devon County Council or any other person without prior consent of the parent. This policy will apply to all contact with parents whether it is individual or group work involving disclosure of personal information.

Parents will be encouraged to share relevant information with school staff, other services or individuals when it is in the best interests of the parent or of their child to do so. Information will only be shared with parents' express consent. Confidentiality should be interpreted as a facilitative structure to ensure parents do not feel disempowered in discussing issues for which they want support, not as an assumption that information given is best kept secret.

It is considered good practice to ensure that maintaining confidentiality is not interpreted by service users to indicate or imply agreement or collusion with the service user's beliefs or positioning.

Information must be made available within DPPS, if it is relevant to the work of the organisation. There are times when a volunteer or member of staff may need to discuss a parent's confidences with particular individuals within the service. This will be quite appropriate when, for example, seeking information. When seeking information from outside the service on behalf of the parent, the parent's permission must be given. Paid and voluntary staff should explain, on initial contact with parents,

that any information, apart from that which may raise child protection issues or civil safety issues, will remain within the organisation.

4. Statistical Records

DPPS is committed to effective statistical recording of service users to enable us to monitor take-up of service and to identify any policy issues which we may pass on to the Local Authority, Regional and National organisations.

DPPS takes responsibility to ensure all statistical records given to third parties are produced in anonymous form to ensure that individuals cannot be recognised.

5. Safeguarding

Information shared with DPPS is treated confidentially. Information will be passed on without permission if it is perceived that there is serious risk of harm to an individual. This is in line with the legal requirements and DCC Safeguarding Policy. DPPS has safeguarding protocol for staff to follow.

6. Legislative Framework

DPPS will ensure it meets statutory and legal requirements, including the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Children's Act, Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act.

DPPS complies with the DCC Code of Practice on Confidentiality

<http://staff.devon.gov.uk/confidentialitysept083.pdf>

8. Monitoring the Policy

All Steering Group members will receive a copy of the Confidentiality Policy. Existing and new members of staff, volunteers and Management/Steering Group members will be introduced to the Confidentiality Policy via induction and training. The Policy will be reviewed annually and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Board.