



Ethics Statement and Policy

There are serious concerns for Trustees, BCC staff and Volunteers in their roles relating to accessing or participating in meetings where confidential personal information about clients receiving either formal 'at-home' care or 'Befriending' is raised through our partnership arrangements with Highland Hospice.

Key ethical principles

In the past the health system often operated under the principle of beneficence where the clinician or consultant knows what's best for a client was acceptable. This culture no longer applies.

Now ethical principles define that client consent for treatment or help is required and that any client should expect that confidentiality is expected in all respects regarding all personal information – this includes names, addresses, treatments, help and consultations that may be undertaken in respect of any client's welfare. Such information should be available only to those actively involved in respect of the client's welfare and with client consent. In our health system, these rules apply unless there are overwhelming reasons to countermand such (for example a public health risk). Acting without consent can have serious implications and conflicts with BCC Data Protection Policy.

Client consent is either granted by the client or by agreement with the formally authorised client's representative – should it be deemed beneficial to the client then the client or their authorised representative may also give formal consent to release or share information with whom they may chose. In this sense consent and the right to confidentiality and privacy are very closely attached.

Policy

With that in mind it is important that BCC trustees, staff and volunteers that are not directly involved with that client care (at-home or befriending) should:

- Not attend meetings where client issues including names, details of care etc are to be discussed. It might be argued that for limited practical reasons trustees who are also registered clinicians might occasionally become involved in some of these discussions – but as exceptions and with consent as detailed.
- Not hold or review paperwork or notes about clients.
- If a carer, member of HH staff or Befriender raises an issue with a trustee, staff member or volunteer without client consent that contains a client's personal details then such should be politely declined. Requests for client help (e.g. transport) would have prior client agreement.
- If a trustee, staff member or volunteer is in a general meeting with carers or befrienders and is without relevant client consent – for example a training day or an informal gathering – and discussion about clients arises then that individual must remove him/herself from that discussion citing client confidentiality.