

Keeping it quiet!

Confidentiality Policy

February 2015

We at MAC believe that you have the right to confidentiality to protect your interests. We will keep all your dealings with us confidential, and every area of our service will be run in a confidential way.

What does 'confidential' mean?

We will not:

- tell anyone that you are using our service
- tell anyone that you are in our building
- give any information about you to anyone outside our own team of trustees, staff and volunteers, unless you first give us your permission or as noted below
- use your name (only your case number) in written external communications between our team members

We will:

- provide a private room for your meetings with us
- hold discussions about you between our team members only in private surroundings
- keep written and electronic information about you securely

Your records

Our Centre Manager is responsible for making sure that all your paperwork is kept safely. All notebooks, calculation sheets, letters or other sources of information will be locked in secure filing-cabinets at the end of each day. Electronic records are password-protected and kept securely. If held on transferable memory storage devices they are locked away as if they were paper records.

Giving permission

When we agree with you to start working on your behalf (such as contacting your creditors) we make this clear and give you two forms to sign, which are 'Your agreement with us' and a authorisation for MAC to disclose your details to a third party. We will always check whether you agree to us making contact with you at home or at work, and what to say if someone else answers the phone (e.g. if we can't mention MAC or need to block the display of our office telephone number).

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A large print copy of this policy is available on request

Statistics

We need to keep statistics so that we can check our own performance. We may sometimes give these statistics to others: to people who are researching the use of money advice services, or if we are asking for financial or practical support from another organisation. If this happens, we will make sure that no names are used and you can't personally be identified from the statistical information.

Will we ever break confidentiality?

Everything we discuss will be treated as confidential unless otherwise agreed with you. We will break confidentiality if we feel someone is in real danger of harming themselves or another, or if required to do so by law. If we share information in external supervision or professional development will keep your identity unrecognisable.

It is possible that our team may uncover things which they think need to be passed on to others: for example, by law we have to report child abuse and fraud. It is important to know that breaking confidentiality is always a last resort and you should feel as safe as possible, so this is what would happen in such a case:

- The team member will tell the Trustees (the Complaints Officer, who is one of the Trustees, will not be present) as soon as possible what they think should be reported and why. The Trustees will record this conversation in writing.
- The Trustees will take time with the team member to discuss every way through the problem.
- It is the Trustees who will then have to decide whether or not to pass the information on and who should receive it:
 - If they do, they will make a full written report (if time permits) and then take appropriate action.
 - If they do not, that is the end of the matter.
- Nobody will discuss the matter with our Complaints Officer. That way, if you or anyone else complains about the matter, the Officer will be able to investigate it without being prejudiced.
- If a team member needs to take immediate action in breaking confidentiality, they will report to the trustees after the event, as soon as practically possible.

Confidentiality and the law

We will regularly check that our standards of confidentiality conform to current legislation.

Making sure that it works!

At least every two years the Trustees check that what this policy says is right and that we are following it, giving full training to our team where necessary. All the MAC team and clients are welcome to suggest improvements to this policy and our practice to help MAC work in your best interests.