# **Confidentiality**

Throughout your placement you will be accessing and gathering sensitive information about people’s lives and circumstances. You must ensure that those who use services, carers and other professionals cannot be identified by others who have no need to know who they are. This is a legal requirement and an essential part of demonstrating respect for others. Likewise, ensuring that you do not access information inappropriately or unnecessarily is crucial.

## Placement-related information

Confidential documents and information will be accessed by the student while undertaking work on behalf of the placement provider. This may be:

1.   Shared within the placement with the people involved in assessing your work and

2.   Shared with University, as evidence that you have successfully completed all of the required stages of placement.

It is essential that effective steps are taken to ensure that individuals cannot be identified when information is shared. Using pseudonyms may not be sufficient if other details used to describe the service user could identify them. For submission to university, the placement provider and team name should also be redacted and a generic name used (such as Local Authority adult LD team/ child protection team). The only people who should be identified apart from yourself are the practice educator, the work place supervisor and university staff.

Observing confidentiality is not merely an academic/administrative task; it also demonstrates your ability to meet the PCF, promote anti oppressive practice and to work within policy guidance in a professional manner. It is a requirement of Social Work England, and you have a duty under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to keep personal data secure.

 Ensure you never share any details regarding service users or colleagues with friends, family members or other people outside of the placement provider/ University. It is sometimes important for students to discuss their thoughts, feelings and experiences of placement with people in their personal life. However, these discussions should never make explicit reference to any service users and should always show respect to the service user, their family, staff and the placement provider.

**The following guidelines should be adhered to at all times:-**

1. Original documents should never be shared outside of the placement provider.
2. Copies of documents should be shared with university only after they have been rigorously checked to ensure anonymity etc, including the removal of identifying logos. For hard copy documents, using correction-fluids or markers to obliterate names etc. is not sufficient; documents treated in this way should always be re-photocopied.
3. Real names, addresses and birth dates should never be included. Ages may sometimes be relevant, but need not always be exact. When false names are used, there should always be an explicit declaration that they are false names. Real initials must not be used and non-existent place names are preferable to incorrect, real, ones.
4. Photographs of service users should not be included under any circumstances.

**Serious lack of attention to issues of confidentiality will call into question whether students have met social work value requirements, as laid out in the PCF and by the regulator (SWE). This may result in fitness to practice concerns being raised and / or in a placement fail.**

## General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Within both university and your placement provider, you will undertake mandatory GDPR training where you will be advised as to how to ensure you follow the guidelines and procedures of GDPR. You will not be able to access the placement provider systems until you have completed this. If you are not offered this training or you need further clarification following the training, it is your responsibility to let your practice educator/ university liaison know, so further support and training can be provided to you.

 Within each placement provider a great deal of sensitive information is held regarding individual service users. It is only acceptable to access this information if you have been explicitly asked to by your practice educator or another relevant person within the placement provider. Accessing information without permission to do so is in breach of GDPR. Accessing information without permission includes that of yourself, family members or other people you may know.

 Most placement providers hold a record of what information has been accessed and can be used as evidence if it is suspected that a student has breached someone’s confidentiality. If there has been a breach this will be taken extremely seriously, and fitness to practice procedures will always be initiated in these circumstances. Breaches in GDPR can potentially have personal implications for a student, and could result in a fine, criminal conviction, placement failure or withdrawal from the course.

 Similarly, students must follow placement provider policies and procedures as regards the storage and movement of documents, and should take care to ensure that they are not lost or stolen e.g. on public transport. Sensitive or confidential information should not be taken home. If for any valid reason documents are taken out of the placement provider, they must be returned as soon as possible. Sickness or annual leave is not an appropriate reason for any delay in returning notes/ documents to the placement provider. If it is suspected or confirmed that a student has confidential or sensitive documents at home and has failed to return these, this will result in fitness to practice procedures.