

NHS Training for AHP Support Workers

Workbook 5: Confidentiality and Medical Records



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5.1 Aim

The aim of this workbook is to introduce the Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) to confidentiality and medical records and to understanding their own role and responsibilities.

5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this workbook you will be able to:

- Understand what is meant by confidentiality.
- Understand own responsibilities in relation to maintaining patient confidentiality.
- Identify and recognise information that should remain confidential.
- Contribute to the working environment as one which ensures confidentiality.

5.3 Access to Medical Records

Automatic access to medical records for Allied Health Professionals is granted by the Health Board. As a support worker, you are granted the same right, under the supervision of a clinician. This right of access places us in a position of responsibility with respect to the records.

Our responsibilities include:

- Records must be kept secure at all times and filing cabinets, or offices used for storing records in the department, must be kept locked at all times.
- Staff must not retain health records unnecessarily.
- Staff must ensure that records are never left in places accessible to unauthorised persons.
- Any destruction of documents containing patient information should ensure that security and confidentiality are maintained.



Find out and record here what the arrangements are for record storage in your area of work.

Who might unauthorised persons be?
How would you ensure in your handling of records, that the records are not
made accessible to unauthorised persons?
How is destruction of documents containing patient information conducted in the
department? The administration staff can help you find this information.

5.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality means keeping information private when it should be kept private. However, not all information should be kept private and the difficulty arises when we have to make judgements about:

- When to keep something private and when to pass it on
- From whom information should be kept private and to whom it should be given
- Knowing how to keep information private

Your health board Confidentiality policy gives clear guidance on the matter of divulging medical information to anyone other than those dealing directly with the healthcare needs of the patient. Patients provide information to healthcare professionals in the belief that the information will be made known only to those persons requiring it for the treatment of the patient. Such trust forms the basis for healthcare relationships and without it there cannot be real patient care.

On no account must information that you have obtained from the medical records be divulged to anyone other than healthcare professionals who are concerned directly with the care, diagnosis and / or treatment of the patient. Failure to observe this rule will be regarded by your employer as serious misconduct, which could result in serious disciplinary action being taken, including dismissal.



To whom might you divulge confidential information that you have obtained
from the medical or your AHP records during your work?

Write down example in the table below of people who have a right or need to know about your patients.

People	What they have a right or need to know about your patient

Your patients probably want as much confidentiality as you do, therefore you should help them to keep their affairs as private as they want.

Remember that the healthcare relationship is based on trust. What harm might be done if the patient found that something was written in the case records against their wishes?



What do you want kept private about yourself? Put yourself in the position of one of your patients.

Write here what information you definitely would not want to divulge	? This may
relate to your religious or political beliefs, or to your sex life.	

What information would you be prepared to give, but only on condition that it was kept confidential to your healthcare provider and not passed to anyone else?

What information would you be prepared to provide that you would not mind
virtually anyone else finding out about?

Idle Chat and Tittle Tattle

Much information about patients is not written down. Much is spoken information shared between colleagues, or between staff and patients relatives.

Your colleagues do need to know and have a right to have some information about your patients, but it should be largely restricted to what they need to know and must never include information that the patient has asked to be kept secret, except in very special circumstances.

You must think about whether your patient would object to your saying something about them. Funny stories or complaints about the patient are not what your colleagues have a right or need to know.

Discussing patients with others may have serious consequences, but often other patients or relatives are enquiring as to the welfare or progress of an individual. What information to provide may pose you with a dilemma?

Indicating that it might be best to ask the patient themselves may be the most appropriate response, or you could ask the patient what they want others to be told. If the patient is unable to tell you, think about what might be in the patient's best interests for others to know.



Supposing you heard two colleagues chatting about a patient in the hearing of another patient. How would you intervene? What would you tell them to convince them that this is an important matter?

Document your responses here.

What kinds of information should never be gossiped about between colleagues? Who should you never discuss patients with?

What about talking to colleagues, other patients, patient's relatives, your own friends and relatives, others who do not share your care of the patient?

Write your responses here.

Making private places

One danger to confidentiality is when people discuss information where they can be overheard by others who should not have access to that information.

5.5 Consent

Implicit consent

In the NHS we are able to pass on confidential information about patients to appropriate others. This policy is one 'of implicit consent'. Therefore unless patients ask otherwise it is assumed that the information can be shared between the health professionals caring for that patient.

There are no obligations relating to implicit consent.

- Patients should be asked whenever possible.
- They should be warned in advance that their information may be passed on to others and to whom it will be passed on.
- This should only be done if it benefits the person.
- Information should only be shared with those who have the right to know it and need to know it.
- Information should only be shared with those who can be trusted to keep it confidential.
- Information should be accurate and up to date.

Information must be passed on, if not doing so would:

- Lead to serious harm continuing or happening to someone else
- Lead to serious harm continuing or happening to the person themselves
- Allow a criminal case to go undetected.

Patients may request that information they tell you is not passed on to others. What must you report, even if the patient does not want you to?

Patients may wish that some information is not recorded, such as details that they do not wish their family to know. In that case you must respect the request.

Other information, such as details of medical symptoms they have experienced overnight must be recorded and passed on, even if the patient does not wish it.



Make a list of information the patient may tell you, but that you would not pass on
if they asked you not to.

Make a list of information that you must pass on, even if the patient asked you not to.

What should you tell patients about who information might be shared with?
How should you warn patients that there are some kinds of information that you
will have to pass on whether or not they agree?

Do you know if someone is genuine?

Relatives may telephone the department to request information about the patient's progress.



How would you ensure that the person is who they say they are?
How would you find out?

You cannot release information without being certain that the person to whom you are speaking to is genuine. One way of doing this would be to ask for a piece of information about the person, then check it with the patient before calling the enquirer back.

Think of examples from your own work of situations in which you dealt with confidentiality issues. Discuss how you dealt with the situation with your supervising therapist. Was there anything that you might have done better?

Record an incident here or in your portfolio and discuss the options that you
considered and actions that were taken.

5.6 Confidentiality and Medical Records Workbook Completion

Your mentor / supervisor will sign your portfolio to indicate that you have completed this workbook successfully.

Objective	Supervisors Signature	Date
Explain what is meant by the term		
confidentiality		
Describe own responsibilities in		
Relation to patient confidentiality		
Recognise what information should		
be kept confidential and what must		
be shared		
Demonstrate how to arrange the		
environment to ensure confidentiality		
Employ principles of confidentiality in		
practice		
Support worker (name)		
Support workers signature		
Supervisor (name)		
Supervisors signature		
Date		

5.7 Confidentiality and Medical Records Reflection

Suggested KSF Dimensions: C1, C5 and IK1

This form should be placed in the appropriate section of your portfolio.

What did you learn from this module?		
How has this influenced your	work?	
now has this initiative your	WOIR	
Date module completed		







