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Information Handling of Personal Data

This Code of Practice outlines 5 E Ltd's responsibilities and practices in respect of handling information for customer's personal data. Customer's personal data means practically any information about, or correspondence relating to, a named customer. This includes names, addresses, National Insurance Number, nationality/domicile, as well as more obviously 'sensitive' information such as assessment/award & qualification results, or other information. Please refer to the Data Protection Policy for further information.

Confidentiality

All members of staff who have access to customer personal data as part of their job required to comply with the following;

- Data is only used for the purpose for which they are collected
- Data is confidentiality is maintained at all times
- Data accuracy is maintained
- Data is held securely
- Only the data that is necessary for the conduct of normal business is collected & retained.

In addition, all staff should be aware of a customer's right of privacy in matters relating to his/her health and welfare and when advising customers, staff should make it clear at the outset of a discussion whether the content is to remain confidential and the extent of the confidentiality to be allowed for disclosure.

Staff working as Advisers will not pass on personal information about customers (including information on attendance) to anyone outside 5 E Ltd. (including training staff) subject to the following exceptions:

(a) Where (JC plus, SFA, etc), reserve the right at anytime to inspect personal data as to ensure that we have robust systems and procedures in place to meet out contractual obligations with regards to the Data Protection Act.

(b) Where the member of staff has the express consent of the customer to disclose the information.

(c) Where the member of staff would be liable to civil or criminal court procedure if the information was not disclosed.

(d) Where the member of staff believes the customer or third party is in serious danger.

In any of these circumstances the advisor will normally encourage the customer to pass on information to the relevant person/agency. If there is no indication that this has happened, or is likely to happen, or if the crisis or danger is sufficiently

acute, the advisor may pass on the information directly.
Consent to disclose information will be sought from the customer, if at all possible.

Supervision

In line with their professional requirements advisers may discuss counselling sessions with a supervisor external to the service. In this process the identity of the customer is not revealed. The purpose of supervision is to help the adviser reflect on their work with customers.

Liaison and Correspondence

With the express permission of the customers it may be appropriate for the advisor to liase with, or write to, a third party - for example a personal tutor or General Practitioner. In the case of telephone calls the purpose of the call, and the nature and extent of the information to be given, will be agreed with the customers prior to the call. In the case of letters, customers will agree the contents and wherever possible read the letter before it is sent.

Record keeping and Data Protection

It is essential for advisors to be able to keep records on customers and their sessions. All customers using 5 E Ltd. will be asked to sign the appropriate record form to agree to notes being kept. If a customer will not sign, only one session can be offered. In the session it will be made clear why advice or counselling cannot be given or a series of sessions offered.

Advice and Guidance notes may record the points raised by the customers, and the advice or information given by the advisor. Agreed action to be taken is also usually recorded with details of follow up action and correspondence. They may also record background information and key issues worked on in the sessions. These will vary in length and detail. Points of concern are also noted.

Access to notes

Under the Data Protection Act, customers have a right of access to all notes kept on them. If those notes contain references to other individuals these may not be available to the customers, as protection is also granted to third parties. It will be important not just to show the notes to the customer, but for the advisor to talk to them about what their file contains and why. Some notes are in shorthand and may need explaining.
If a customers wishes to see the file, he/she should make a written request to inspect their personal information giving sufficient notice to the advisor.

Disposing of confidential information

There should be procedures for the disposal of confidential information. Paper should be shredded and then disposed of appropriately.

Security

All staff should ensure that personal data are:

- Kept in a locked filing cabinet, drawer, cupboard or room, whether it is in paper or electronic format when not being worked on or when the office is left unattended (even for a short time) especially passport/travel documents or any other documents eg CV, Enrolment Form, etc that could lead to identify theft or any fraudulent usage.

- Not visible, either on desks or on computer screens, to any visitors ; ensure screen savers and computer screen locks are used. Passwords should not be disclosed to anyone (including managers)
- Not sent via email, if it is sensitive information
- Not disclosed orally or in writing without the permission of the student unless it is part of a legitimate company process
- Not left on shared printers/photocopiers
- Disposed of securely in line with the Retention and Disposal Policy whether in paper format or electronically

Further information on disclosure of student information under the Data Protection Act (Internal, External & Emergency disclosures, request for student information under the Freedom of Information Act, etc) or any further clarifications or understanding , can be requested from your line manager or please refer to 5 E's protection policy.

Review of Policy

This was reviewed in June 2018 and is due for next review in June 2019.

If you require this policy in a larger font size, please contact the HR Department.