

Confidentiality Policy

Version Control Sheet

VERSION	DATE OF REVIEW	IMPLEMENTED AND AUDITED BY	STATUS	COMMENTS
4	01/04/2024	Ann Kelly (Registered Manager)	Active	To be reviewed 01/04/2025

Purpose

Clinical24 Staffing Limited recognises the importance of confidentiality in maintaining the privacy, dignity, and trust of clients, patients, and their families. This policy outlines the purpose, statement, procedures, and guidance for the implementation of confidentiality practices within the organisation.

Statement

Clinical24 Staffing Limited is committed to ensuring the confidentiality of client and patient information in compliance with relevant Northern Ireland legislation, professional codes of conduct, and best practices. This policy establishes guidelines and procedures to safeguard the confidentiality, integrity, and security of personal and sensitive information.

Procedure and Guidance

Professional Code of Conduct

All healthcare professionals employed by or contracted to the Company are bound by their respective professional codes of conduct and guidelines relevant to maintaining confidentiality in healthcare practice.

Healthcare professionals should familiarize themselves with their professional code of conduct and adhere to its principles in all aspects of their work, including the handling and disclosure of client and patient information.

Disclosure of Client or Patient Information

Prior to considering the disclosure of information it is essential you know the local procedure of the organisation you are working within:

- Client or patient information shall not be disclosed to unauthorized individuals or parties unless there is a legitimate purpose or legal basis for doing so.

- Authorized disclosure of client or patient information may occur with appropriate consent, or in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements such as court orders or statutory obligations.
- Healthcare professionals should exercise professional judgment and consult with their superiors or legal professionals if uncertain about whether to disclose client or patient information.
- Where a client or patient are informed of the use of disclosure, understand the choices and agree to the disclosure, then explicit consent has been given, this can be verbal or written (DOH Confidentiality: NHS Code of Practice pages 29-34).

What are your obligations?

- Patient data controlled by your placement site falls under the General Data Protection Regulation. As such, all staff have a legal duty to protect personal information they may encounter during their work.
- All temporary workers must meet the standards outlined in the Code of Conduct so that information that is confidential is not compromised.
- Temporary workers should understand the Freedom of Information Act 2000 so that they know what information can be disclosed and what information is classified as confidential.

Requests for Information on Clients or Patients

- Requests for information relating to clients or patients from external individuals or organizations shall be handled in accordance with established procedures and legal requirements.
- Only authorized personnel with a legitimate need-to-know shall handle and respond to such requests.
- Prior to releasing any information, healthcare professionals should verify the identity and authority of the person or organization making the request.

Carelessness:

- Do not talk about clients or patients in public places where you can be overheard.
- Do not leave any medical records or confidential information lying around unattended.
- Make sure that the general public cannot see any computer screens or other displays of information.
- Handover sheets must never be taken home. Shred or place in a confidential waste bin at the end of your shift.
- Be aware of limitations to client or patient confidentiality, e.g. when handing over at a patient's bedside.

Caldicott principles:

The Caldicott Principles provide a framework for the lawful and appropriate sharing of personal confidential information in health and social care settings.

The 'Caldicott' principles and recommendations apply specifically to patient-identifiable information and emphasise the need for controls over the availability of such information and how to access it. The six Caldicott principles, applying to the handling of patient-identifiable information, are:

Principle 1: Justify Purposes – Individuals, departments and organisation must justify the purposes for which information is required.

This includes justifying the purposes to the public for specific clients within each organisation. Every proposed use or transfer of patient-identifiable information within or from an organisation should be clearly defined and scrutinised, with continuing uses regularly reviewed by an appropriate guardian.

Principle 2: Do not use patient-identifiable information unless it is absolutely necessary.

This means assessing information flows and use, ensuring that patient identifiable information is removed unless a genuine case can be made for its inclusion and there is no alternative. The need for patients to be identified should be considered at each stage of satisfying the purpose.

Principle 3: Use the minimum amount of necessary patient-identifiable information.

Where use of patient-identifiable information is considered to be essential, each individual item of information should be considered and justified so that the minimum amount of identifiable information is transferred or accessible as necessary for each given function to be carried out.

Principle 4: Access to patient-identifiable information should be on a strict need-to-know basis.

Only those individuals who need access to patient-identifiable information should have access to it and they should only have access to the information items that they need to see. This may mean introducing access controls or splitting information flows where one information flow is used for several purposes.

Principle 5: Everyone with access to patient-identifiable information should be aware of their responsibilities.

Action should be taken to ensure that those handling patient-identifiable information, both clinical and non-clinical staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and obligations to respect patient confidentiality.

Principle 6: Understand and comply with the law.

Every use of patient-identifiable information must be lawful. Someone in each organisation handling patient information should be responsible for ensuring that the organisation complies with legal requirements.

The Clinical24 Staffing Limited shall adhere to the Caldicott Principles in managing and sharing client or patient information, ensuring that the necessary safeguards are in place for lawful and ethical information sharing.

Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The Company shall comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act (2018) and the GDPR in the collection, storage, and processing of client and patient data.

Healthcare professionals should be familiar with their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act (2018) and the GDPR and handle personal data in accordance with its provisions.

You must maintain the confidentiality of all information regarding clients, staff and other health service businesses in accordance with the GDPR. Further information the on GDPR can be found at <https://ico.org.uk>.

You must not, without prior permission, disclose any information regarding clients or staff. In circumstances where it is known that a staff member has disclosed information to unauthorised person, that staff member will be liable for dismissal. The GDPR also renders an individual liable for prosecution in the event of unauthorised disclosure of information.

Information regarding patients is also subject to GDPR rules. You should follow the patient consent guidelines below, understanding you are processing data following the rules of the placement organisation (the data controller).

Social Media

Healthcare professionals should exercise caution when using social media to ensure that client or patient information is not disclosed or compromised.

Posting, sharing, or accessing client or patient information on social media platforms is strictly prohibited unless appropriate consent or legal authorization has been obtained.

Social media technologies take on different forms, and include but are not limited to, magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video rating and social bookmarking.

Technologies include blogging, picture sharing, vlogs, wall-posting, music sharing, crowdsourcing and voice over IP. Essentially, computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share information, ideas and pictures/videos in virtual communities or networks. Well known sites include (but are not limited to); Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, Facebook, Foursquare, Yelp, Qype, YouTube and Wikipedia.

Those using social media must be aware of data protection issues and ensure that confidential, personal and proprietary information is protected. No-one should post personal information about anyone other than themselves.

All content is subject to libel law. Inappropriate or inaccurate comments which are damaging to a person's reputation should be avoided, as they could result in a claim of libel. To prove such a claim, a permanent statement is needed, usually in written text, video or pictures. Social media postings should be considered as permanent statements in this way.

The misuse of social media, or the posting of inappropriate content, may result in disciplinary action or referral to a professional body such as the NMC or NISCC.

All Registered Nurses must be familiar with and follow the NMC Guidance on Using Social Media Responsibly.


Breach of this policy regarding social media use may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or contractual obligations.

Review and Compliance

By implementing this Confidentiality Policy, Clinical24 Staffing Limited aims to protect the privacy, dignity, and confidential information of clients, patients, and their families, in compliance with legal requirements and professional standards.

This Confidentiality Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with internal policies, relevant legislation, professional codes of conduct, and best practices in maintaining confidentiality. Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or contractual obligations.

Next Review

Reviewed by:	Ann Kelly
Title:	Registered Manager
Signed:	
Last Review Date:	01/04/2024
Actions:	Address Updated

Next Review Date: April 2025