



Bridges Project
Inspiring young people to build a confident future



Knowing Us, Knowing You

Confidentiality, Privacy & Data Protection 2020

At Bridges Project we hope that you feel you get the help and support you need.

Why do we keep information about you?

The main reason we keep information is so that we can help you. To do that we need to write and store information about you in files and in databases.

We understand that you may feel unsure about what you can tell us so this booklet outlines:

- ◆ What type of information we need and keep about you.
- ◆ Who we share the information with.
- ◆ What we do with the information you give us, how long we keep it, how we keep it safe and how we destroy it.

Also, the people who provide money to run the project like to know that we are doing what they have helped to pay for. They may ask for basic information about you but in most cases this is provided anonymously.

This is why we keep files on young people.

What's in the file?

This depends on what you tell us, what we think is helpful to write down and what you do not want us to write down. We do try to write down only what we think will help you. If you tell us things you don't want written down, we will respect this. You must remember though that staff work with a lot of young people and by not writing information down we may forget things that could be important in getting you what you need.

Whatever your circumstances, we will record the very basic information like your age, date of birth, your contact address and your name etc. Without this basic information we will be unable to provide you with a service. We'll also make a note about the reason you were referred and extra details referrers give us.

Copies of letters, notes you may write yourself, notes about telephone calls, texts, and

emails are all held in your file. If you are not sure about what goes into your file please ask a worker. They will be able to show you the file and copies of the forms and contact sheets we use to write things down.

Who gets to see your file?

You, of course, can see your file

Because the files are locked away, you may not always be able to see it immediately. But nothing will be hidden away from you. Before other projects or services send us information on you we will always tell them that you can see the whole of your file.

Because you may not always get to see the same worker all the time, your file can be seen by other relevant members of staff. Occasionally, supervisors may want to have a look to make sure workers are doing a good job for you. This is called a Case File Review. If your usual workers are off sick or on holiday, a different member of staff may need to see the file but only if they are working with you at that time.

Sometimes, people from a university or government department will want to do some research on how young people manage difficulties, or on how well the Project is doing. These people might want to look at some files. They can only do this if they get permission from you.

Some other people do have the right to look at and, sometimes keep, your files. These include:

- ◆ The Police, if they have a warrant issued by the Courts.
- ◆ Sheriffs' Officers if they have a warrant from the Court.
- ◆ Department for Work and Pensions Fraud Investigators if they have a warrant from the Court.
- ◆ Social Workers if they are investigating a child protection allegation made by you or against you.

The Project will prevent other people from seeing your file without your permission. This includes your parents, teachers, friends, other family members etc. If we need to pass on information pulled from files we will tell you.

There are some things you need to think about before you tell us!

Young people tell us many different things. Some of these things make us laugh; some make us unhappy or angry.

Please do not be afraid to talk to us if you think we might be able to help. However, we will not be able to help you if you are trying to defraud Jobcentre Plus, get a house by lying or avoid paying for bills and other things you are due.

We are keen to help you resolve any difficulty you may have and really want you to succeed in managing the different challenges which face you.

But we will not lie for you as this can be against the law and puts the project at risk of being closed down.

If, for example, you want us to help you to claim, but don't want us to tell Jobcentre Plus coach that you get some money from a part-time job, we will not be able to do this. We can continue to help you with other things, and will advise you on what you might get in benefits if you are working part-time. But we will not act on your behalf with the services affected by fraud or deception.

Your workers will advise you before you say too much if they think you may be about to commit fraud, and what the penalties could be.

In our view, it is always better to be honest and to receive what you are entitled to, rather than trying to cheat the system, which can be disastrous for yourself and others around you.

Does confidential always mean secret?

We will respect your wishes to keep things a secret unless what you have to tell us will badly affect other people. The secret or confidential information you tell us might not be written down anywhere but your workers might still have to share it with colleagues if this is important to help you. Otherwise we will not tell anyone else about it if you do not want us to. You must remember that we might encourage you to give us permission to share some information with others if we think it is necessary. You still have the right to refuse this though.

There are some things we do have to share

If what you tell us makes us think that you, a child, in your family or with friends may be at risk from abuse, neglect or sexual exploitation we will have to take things further and do not need your consent for this.

This usually involves the Social Work Department or the Police. If members of staff think you are about to disclose information which takes us down this path, they will advise you to stop and think before going any further. This should not stop you from saying what you think is right but is to make sure you understand what might happen if you decide to take things further.

What you need to do to let us get information held on you by other agencies?

A law called the Data Protection Act means that you have the right to prevent agencies sharing some information about you with other people.

We may ask you to complete a consent form if we need to share information about you with Jobcentre Plus, the Housing Department, Social Work Department, Scottish

Government researchers, schools etc. This consent form could be sent to these people who will then be able to talk to with us about your case. This piece of paper is very important as without it we wouldn't ask the DWP why your claim is taking so long, or perhaps the Housing Department about your tenancy application. We will automatically share information of a less sensitive nature with, for example, Scottish Government researchers if we are assured it is going to be anonymised in their final reports.

Together, we will only discuss what is important at that time. If you prefer you can give us written consent every time we need to contact someone on your behalf. This is okay if we can reach you immediately and you are able to drop the consent forms off at the different services. It does make it difficult, though, if we need to act on your behalf in your absence. The choice will always be yours. Please remember though that we can only act for you with your consent and that when we need to act quickly, a signed consent form is the best option.

Your right to privacy

The law also protects your right to privacy, and in some cases can help you if you feel that you have not been dealt with fairly by public bodies.

Bridges Project fully supports these rights. Staff and volunteers will always treat the information you give us with respect. Your files will be locked away and will not be on public show at any time.

Staff and volunteers will not gossip about you either in or out of the office. We will not permit other young people to gossip about you either. In return, we expect the same from you. We will challenge any gossip within the project about other young people. We will not provide you with any information about other young people unless we have their written approval.

We will not answer any queries about whether a young person is in the building unless permission has been given to us. This might seem very strict but by treating everyone the same we are able to trust and be trusted.

What happens when you leave the Project?

When you leave the Project we will keep your file for three years before we shred it. This will allow us to pick things up with you very quickly if you come back for more support or advice. We will also destroy all the information held about you and communications which can identify you on computers, mobile phones and other devices.

If you have any questions about the information covered, please ask a member of staff to explain things to you.

Remember - we only act in what we think is your best interest and we will only divulge your identity to other people without your permission to safeguard you or to enable research and evaluation to take place. We know how important your privacy is and we will do our very best to make sure this is respected.

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