



## Advice Service Confidentiality Policy

### Executive summary:

The Advice Service understands confidentiality to mean that no information regarding a member using the service shall be given directly to any third party, who is external to the Advice Service team, without the member's prior expressed consent to disclose such information. (See below for exceptions to this policy.)

The team consists of 3 Student Advisers and all reception/staff working for the Advice Service. The line manager of the Advice Service, the Head of Student Support and Representation or the CEO or the Human Resources Manager of the Students' Union, maybe consulted about cases where this is deemed necessary for the safety of the service and wider community and would be bound by the confidentiality policy when this occurs.

### Policy:

#### Exceptions to this policy:

Circumstances where confidentiality may be breached, in exception to this policy, include:

- *There is the perception of a serious risk of self harm or harm to others.*
- *There is a conflict of interest which necessitates an adviser informing one client that they can no longer act on their behalf and referring them to another adviser. By its very nature, this will draw attention to the fact that they are acting for the other party - see Conflict of Interest Policy.*
- *Where not to do so would break the law.*
- *Where the safety of children or vulnerable adults is at risk.*

If a Student Adviser feels that they may need to breach confidentiality (except in a Conflict of Interest) they must discuss the case with The Head of Student Support and Representation prior to any breach and where appropriate the member affected would be informed prior to any breach. The Head of Student Support and Representation, or in the absence of the Head of Student Support and Representation any of the Student Advisers, may consult with the Student Unions' CEO in such cases.

### Case records:

Case notes and any other recorded information will be kept secure and accessible only to the Advice Service team except in the case of an external audit via Advice Pro.

### External Auditing:

In the interest of providing a safe and professional service case records may be accessed for monitoring and auditing purposes by a designated external auditor who will be bound by this confidentiality policy. Any external auditor used would not be employed by the University.

### Access to Records:

Members who have used the Advice Service have the right of access to their own case records. The Advice Service reserves the right to satisfy ourselves as to the enquirer's identity. Requests for copies of a member's own case records needs to be made in writing to the Head of Student Support and Representation. Providing a copy of the case records may take up to two weeks. Case records will be kept for six years after which they will be destroyed.

## **Statistical recording:**

The Advice Service is committed to effective statistical recording of service users to enable us to monitor take-up of service and to identify trends, areas of concern and any policy issues arising. It is the Head of Student Support and Representation's responsibility to ensure all statistical records given to third parties, shall be produced in anonymous form, so that individuals cannot be identified from them.

The Head of Student Support and Representation will monitor this policy to ensure it meets statutory and legal requirements including the DataProtection Act, Children's Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act.

## **Emails:**

The Advice Service makes every effort to ensure the security of emails on our system and will treat all email addresses and email correspondence with members as confidential unless consent to share has been obtained. Unfortunately, no data transmission over the internet can be guaranteed to be secure so the Advice Service cannot guarantee the confidentiality of emails in transmission.

Members send emails to the Advice Service's generic email address [advice@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:advice@brunel.ac.uk). This mailbox is only accessible by the Advice Service team.

The Advice Service team will also correspond with members who have approached us for advice using their work email address. Private email addresses will never be given out or used when communicating with members.

Student Advisers and reception staff will ensure that the confidentiality of emails received and sent is maintained by ensuring no one outside the team can view or have access to their emails. Computers and laptops will be locked when unattended in inaccessible areas.

## **Telephone and Skype calls:**

The Advice Service will treat all telephone numbers and Microsoft Teams Drop Ins as confidential unless consent to share has been obtained. All telephone interviews and Microsoft Teams Drop Ins will be conducted in private offices where they cannot be overheard. The Advice Service will not make recordings of any telephone or Microsoft Teams Drop Ins or allow other people to "listen in", without asking the member's permission.

When contacting members by telephone the Advice Service team will confirm who they are speaking to before releasing any personal or sensitive information. If there is any doubt about the identity of the person answering we may ask for identifying information i.e., student ID number.

When making outgoing calls from the Advice Service phones the call appears to come from the Advice Service main phone number. If anyone other than the person being called answers, we will not identify that we are calling from the Advice Service or why we are calling. If we are asked who is calling, we will identify ourselves by name and that we are calling from the Union.