

## How we handle information

### Who is a service user?

A 'service user' is anyone who uses our services.

### When using our services, you have a right to:

- Be provided with information about our services, how you can access them and where they may be of assistance to meet your individual needs.
- See our Organisational Policies
- Ask for a one-on-one meeting with a support worker.
- See your file if one is held.
- Be assured of individual confidentiality as described in the section below.
- Expect and receive a non-judgmental, discrimination-free and prejudice-free service from Dhiverse.
- Ask for any information, literature or resources relating to HIV and sexual health
- Contribute positive and negative feedback on any of the services delivered by Dhiverse
- Make a complaint. If you are unhappy with Dhiverse services or the way you have been treated by a Dhiverse representative you are encouraged in the first instance, if this is appropriate, to speak with your support worker or another member of staff. If you are still not satisfied you should make a written complaint in line with our Complaints Policy which you will find on our website.
- Participate in service user consultation forums and relevant focus groups as they happen.
- Receive accurate, relevant, and easy to understand information, in your preferred format, which is delivered in a timely manner.

### When using our services, you have responsibility for:

- Participating in an individual needs assessment (if necessary) so we can identify the best and most appropriate support to meet your needs.
- Working together with your support worker to carry out the tasks identified in your support plan, if a support plan is required.
- Engaging in the actions identified in your support plan.
- Keeping your appointment or where possible letting us know at least one day before if you have to cancel or change an appointment time.
- Ensuring maximum benefit from service provision by attending our venues without being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- If participating in a support group, agreeing to and abiding by the agreed group rules. Listening actively in groups and respecting others when they are talking.
- Respecting the rights and safety of our staff; volunteers and other service users using our services.
- Providing feedback that may result in improvements to our services.
- Ensuring any complaint about our service is made within a reasonable time frame so we can respond to it effectively.
- Advising us, where relevant, of any changes to your circumstances which may affect the support we are giving.
- Advising us of any change in your contact details and preferred method of contact.



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### What do we mean by 'Service user confidentiality'?

Diverse understands confidentiality to mean **confidential to the staff and volunteers of Diverse**. No information regarding a service user shall be given directly or indirectly to any third party without that service user's prior consent to disclose such information except where there is a question of serious risk to a person(s).

Confidentiality cannot be assured where the following situations apply:

- If Diverse is obliged to disclose confidential information by a court order

- If a service user gives us information concerning abuse of a child

- If, by keeping confidentiality, a service user might suffer severe injury or abuse

- If, by keeping confidentiality, someone else might suffer severe abuse (including death or serious injury through violence and/or sexual assault)

**NB: Please refer to Diverse Safeguarding Policy in respect of the above points.**

In any situation, where a member of staff believes that information has been disclosed to them by a service user, which may require confidentiality to be broken, this should be discussed with the service user if possible and appropriate and with an appointed person (see below). The views of the service user should always be taken into account, however it may be that the service user does not wish action to be taken; does not wish to become involved in an investigation and/or does not want confidential information to be shared with other individuals and agencies. In such a situation the staff member or volunteer should inform the service user that they have a duty to discuss the disclosure with an appointed person within Diverse. The matter must then be referred to an appointed person to make a decision as to whether Diverse will breach the confidentiality of the service user.

The appointed persons are listed in our Safeguarding policy and procedure and displayed on notice boards in our offices.

Nothing in this section should prevent volunteers covered by inter-agency child protection procedures from complying with their statutory professional duties.

### How service user files are handled

HIV Support Service staff in Diverse, the Office and Information Manager and the CEO will have access to service user files at all times. Other Diverse staff and volunteers are allowed access to a service user file for purposes of supporting the service user when support staff are unavailable and for reporting/safeguarding purposes as agreed with the CEO or delegated person.

All service users, who have a file, have the right to view their file.

Hard copy files must be maintained in line with the Information Governance policy and must be stored securely at all times on Diverse premises.

All computer records will be password protected and compliant with Diverse's IT security policy. No service user file should ever leave the Diverse office without the knowledge of the Office and Information Manager, CEO or delegated person.

Information held on a Diverse service user's hard copy file and electronic file is kept to a minimum, only relevant and factual information is recorded. If a service user provides copies of letters, forms etc. from e.g. NHS, HMRC, DWP for the purposes of support, this information will be shredded at the point it has been acted on and is no longer needed.

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### Policy statement for keeping data and information

#### 1. Financial information

Dhiverse will keep all financial records and information relating to Dhiverse as an organization **for a period of 7 years**. **After 7 years** all records and information will be shredded using a professional confidential waste company.

Information will be stored securely. This is in line with both:

- The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) rules which states information should be kept for 6 years
- HMRC requirements which is to keep financial records for a period of 7 years to cover all HMRC Enquiry time limits after the 6 years.

#### 2. Service user information

Where we have had no contact from a service user for a period of 6 months, the service user file will be moved from the 'Active Service Users' drawer to the 'Infrequent Service Users' drawer. If after a further 6 months we have had no contact from the service user, their file will be shredded using a professional confidential waste company and electronic records will be permanently deleted. This means that no service user file will be kept for longer than 12 months after the last point of contact.

If a service user makes a request for their file to be destroyed sooner than that, then we will act on their request immediately. However, this request must be in writing.

#### 3. Dhiverse staff information

The Data Protection Act stipulates that data and records should only be stored for as long as they are useful, so it's up to the employer to determine how long those records are useful for. However it is recommended that personal information of employees, including contact details, appraisals, reviews, sickness etc. is kept for at least 5 years.

**Dhiverse will keep individual staff records for a period of 6 years.** All Information will be stored securely.

**After 6 years** all records and information will be shredded using a professional confidential waste company.

**If you require this leaflet in a different format or you need further information or assistance, please contact: [enquiries@dhiverse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@dhiverse.org.uk) or on 01223 508805.**



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