

J/601/9470

Promote good
practice in handling
information in health
and social care
settings

Standards

Understand requirements for handling information in health and social care settings

Identify the legislation and codes of practice that relate to handling information in health and social care

and

Summarise the main points of legal requirements and codes of practice for handling information in health and social care

In the second half of the 20th century, because of the progressive computerisation of industries and organisations, personal information about clients, service users and staff began to be stored in databases. So laws were created to regulate the use of this personal data, which balanced the individual's right to confidentiality and the industry's need to use personal data to inform their business.

The Data Protection Act 1984 introduced rules on how to store information and the rights of individuals to access data related to them. As technology advanced the act was revised. The act relates to people living within the United Kingdom and provides a way in which individuals can be in control of the information about themselves. It covers any data that can be used to identify a living person, including names, birthday and anniversary dates, addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers and email addresses. Overall, you have a responsibility as a health or social care worker to safeguard an individual's personal information. You should also treat personal information about other

workers that you have access to in the same way. Your employer must have systems in place to meet the legal requirements about storing information and you must act within your employer's agreed ways of working. Ask your employer to talk you through the system in use in your workplace to protect information.

There are 8 main principles in the act that anyone handling personal data has to adhere to. Personal details:

- **must be processed in a fair and lawful way**
- **can only be processed for limited purpose, e.g. in a way previously specified that you have consented to**
- **have to be relevant, adequate to their intended use and kept to a minimum**
- **have to be accurate and up to date**
- **should not be kept for longer than necessary**
- **should be processed in accordance with your rights**
- **should be stored securely**
- **should not be transferred to other countries where there is no adequate protection in place**

The Data Protection Act was amended in 2003 to bring it in line with EU Directives. This broadened the term 'data' to include organised paper filing systems. You can find more information about the Data Protection Act here: www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000

There is a right under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) to request information held by public authorities. This came into force in January 2005 and is known as 'the right to know'. It allows you to access recorded information (such as emails, meeting minutes, research or reports) held by public authorities in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Under the act, a public authority includes central government and government departments, local authorities, hospitals, doctors' surgeries, dentists, pharmacists and opticians, state schools,

colleges and universities, and police forces and prison services. If you work within an organisation where this applies, please note that the individual has a right to view anything written about them. This may include documents, reports and even emails between 2 co-workers. This means that if you add to any of these records you need to remember that what you write must be accurate and suitable to be viewed by those it concerns. If a public authority believes that the information is covered by a qualified exemption or exception, it must apply the public interest test. This means it has to identify the reason why it is not in the public interest for that information to be shared.

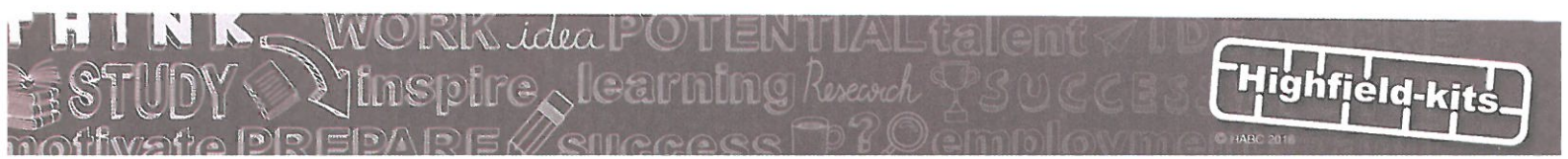
You can find more information here: www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request/the-freedom-of-information-act

Be able to implement good practice in handling information

Describe the features of manual and electronic information storage systems that help ensure security

Your employer will have agreed ways of working in place to protect information. Those in relation to electronic information will include having a computer firewall and password protection. Passwords should only be shared with those who have permission to access the information concerned. If you have a personal

password to access information at work, you should not share it with anyone else. There will also be practices related to paper-based systems, such as where they are kept and the procedure for access. Even when providing care and support in someone's own home it is important to know what records there are and where they are kept. Ask your manager to explain your agreed ways of working about handling information and to answer any questions you may have.



Digital working, digital learning and digital information sharing are becoming everyday practice in adult care. There is increased understanding of the benefits of improved communication and access to a wide range of knowledge. It is now an aspiration that everyone involved in delivering care and support will have the confidence to work digitally and the opportunity to develop their digital skills, whether with computers, smart phones or assistive technology. Assistive technology is any technology that can be used to improve the functional independence of a person with a disability.



Demonstrate practices that ensure security when storing and accessing information

As previously stated, your employer will have workplace policies and procedures in place that will inform you how to record, store and share information. These will follow the principles as laid down in the Data Protection Act as discussed in the section on legislation. As a lead adult care worker you have a responsibility to follow and promote your workplace's procedures on data protection and confidentiality to ensure that personal information is protected. Your employer will ensure that you are informed about the procedures in place and you may have the delegated

responsibility to ensure that this is communicated to, and understood by, the rest of the workers in the team.

You may also need to attend a training session to further increase your knowledge and to ensure that you can put what you have learnt into practice in your day-to-day support of individuals.

You will need to be aware of how to store and access information in a secure way and may also be responsible for supporting others to follow the processes that are in place.

For example, locking confidential information away when not in use or password protecting information held on a computer.



Think about

Take a few minutes to think about the systems you have in place in your setting to ensure security of information.

Maintain records that are up to date, complete, accurate and legible

Care plans are a key record about an individual's needs and choices and include an assessment of risks. They are an important tool in good communication between those who are involved in providing care and support. You should be clear on your employer's format for care plans, how they are completed and what information should be included. They must always be kept up to date, complete,



accurate and legible to ensure quality and consistency of care. They may become legal documents of evidence if at any point there is cause for concern or an enquiry. It is therefore vital you include all details of the agreed care, as well as writing tidily and in a way that is clearly understood, avoiding jargon, and ensuring that the information is factual and not based on opinion. Someone in your workplace will have the responsibility for checking care plans regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Of course, care plans are not the only records that you will need to keep as a health and social care worker. You may be responsible for completing other records such as daily records, incident and accident reports. It is equally important for all records to follow the same basic principles as when you are updating care plans.

Be able to support others to handle information

Support others to understand the need for secure handling of information

In your role as a lead adult care worker it is likely that you will be responsible for supporting others to understand the importance of handling information securely. First and foremost, you should always lead by example and follow the processes and procedures yourself. As someone responsible for others you need to act as a good role model to the rest of the team.

It may be that you will be supporting the new adult care worker through the first few weeks of their induction and will need to be able to explain the appropriate policies and procedures and to support them in their understanding of these and what they mean in practice.



Think about

Listed below are some of the ways that you can support others in their understanding. Can you think of any others?

- **Training in handling information and record-keeping**
- **Discussion in formal supervision meetings**
- **Setting targets in annual appraisals**
- **Shadowing an experienced care worker**
- **Agenda item in team meetings**



Support others to understand and contribute to records

New employees will need training in record-keeping and existing employees will need to attend refresher training as appropriate.

This will give them the background knowledge to aid their understanding of the importance of keeping accurate records. Again, you may be the one responsible for supporting staff to correctly and accurately record in documents that are in use in your adult care setting.

The points listed for secure handing of information are also relevant here to ensure that team members have a full understanding and are able to put their knowledge into practice.