

Understanding Confidentiality

Opening up to professionals can be the first step to getting help. But it can also feel really scary.

You might feel confused about what they're going to do with the information you tell them. Or you might be worried that they will share it with other people, like your family and friends.

When could my information be shared?

You usually have to give permission for your information to be shared. This is known as giving your consent.

In some situations, your information may need to be shared without your consent. This is called 'breaking confidentiality'.

It should only happen if:

- There are concerns that you're at risk of serious harm or you're in danger. For example, if you've told someone that you're being abused, they may need to share this to make sure you stay safe.
- There are concerns that someone else is at serious risk of harm or that they're in danger. For example, if you tell someone your sibling is feeling suicidal, they may need to share what you've said with someone else. This is to make sure your sibling stays safe.
- You're unable to make the decision about sharing your information. For example, if you're not able to understand what you're consenting to and what might happen if you say yes or no.
- Someone is told they have to by law. For example, if the information is needed for a court case.

If the professional does need to tell someone what you've told them, they should always try to tell you first.

If professionals wrongly share your information it can be very upsetting, but there are things you can do:

- Ask why your information was shared. Get in touch with the person or organisation who shared your information to find why it was shared. You should also ask for a copy of their policy on confidentiality.
- If they don't respond or you feel like you're not being treated fairly, you can make a complaint. You can ask the service or organisation you're making the complaint about how to do this.