Chaplaincy - Policy and Protocols in relation to Confidentiality.

1. Introduction
1.1 The overriding aim of the policy is to protect and promote the best interests of residents and service users in the disclosure of personal information and to respect everyone’s right to privacy. As such it accords with our values of being focused on our service users and residents and in being transparent. It also accords with our Christian ethos with its belief in the personal worth and dignity of every person as made in the image of God.

1.2 There tends to be a popular assumption in society that conversations with a clergy person are confidential between the participants. On the other hand the social work of the WLM operates with a team understanding of confidentiality where staff never independently hold onto information. Thus there is a tension between these views and the Chaplain’s role needs to find the appropriate balances between needs, expectations and risk.

1.3 The purpose of this policy is to establish clear parameters in relation to confidentiality within which the chaplain will work.

2. General principles
2.1 Residents and service users have the right to expect to have their confidentiality respected at all times by all WLM staff.

2.2 The chaplain is line managed by the Executive Director and shares relevant information with him to enable the better performance of her duties. At times this may include general references to resident’s and service user’s stories.

2.3 The chaplain will work with a team understanding of confidentiality within each of the services generally in relation to the risk management of each service and specifically as follows:
   a. The Haven: in relation to the care and support needs of residents
   b. KPH: in relation to the enforcement needs of the approved hostel and the care needs of the residents
   c. WLDC: in relation to the care and support needs of the service users
   d. Big House: In relation to the support needs of the residents

When sharing information with a staff team as above, the chaplain will consider how much needs to be disclosed of any conversation, (e.g. it may be possible to say that someone is distressed by something specific, without going into the details of what they shared.)

2.4 Both verbal and written information should only passed on outside of the WLM with the individual’s consent, preferably in writing, other than under the exceptions detailed in 2.5 below.

2.5 Disclosure of personal information outside of the WLM without the informed consent of the individual concerned can only be made under the following exceptions:
   a. where there is a health and safety risk
b. where disclosure is a child or vulnerable adult safeguarding matter
c. to comply with the law or on order of a court
d. in connection with court proceedings or statutory enforcement actions

3. Handling private information
3.1 The Chaplain meets individuals both in an unplanned and planned way, in communal settings and in private on a one to one basis.

The chaplain needs to determine the difference between everyday information from potentially private information, including everyday spiritual information (e.g. whether a person identifies themselves as Christian, Moslem etc) from potentially private spiritual information (e.g. relating an experience of prayer). In so doing due consideration will be given to the context of the conversation, the context of the person, what the information may mean to the individual concerned and the relevance of sharing it with other staff either at the service or in the wider context of the social work, the WLM or beyond.

3.2 When a conversation takes place in a communal setting the Chaplain will have due regard as to whether the conversation takes such a direction that it would be appropriate to suggest that it move to a private space.

3.3 When a person explicitly requests that what is being shared should not go any further then the chaplain should again consider the context of the conversation, the context of the person, what the information means to the individual concerned and the relevance of sharing it more widely as well as the exceptions to confidentiality outlined in 2.5 above.

When someone asks the chaplain to hold a confidence completely to herself the chaplain should warn the individual of circumstances in which confidences will not be kept.

3.4 As a matter of good practice the chaplain will have regular supervision from a supervisor external to the WLM. Personal information from a service user or resident the chaplain has encountered may be shared with the supervisor but in such a way as to protect the identity of the individual.

3.5 Where it is appropriate for the chaplain to refer a person to another external faith group or organisation, she shall clarify with the person what information may be passed. Information will only be shared without permission where it relates directly to the prevention of harm to the person or others and for the management of risk.

4. Risk management of one to one meetings
4.1 Staff at services will advise the chaplain if there are particular risks of which she should be aware in meeting with anyone on a one to one basis.

Staff at the services will advise the chaplain if there are any service users/residents that she should not see alone.
At KPH the chaplain will collect and carry a personal alarm other than when she is just working in the offices on the first floor.

4.2 Private one to one meetings with residents of the Haven, KPH, and Big House and service users of the Day Centre will normally take place at the relevant service.

If the Chaplain meets for private one to one meetings with any of the above off site she will inform her line manager and the manager of service.

If the Chaplain meets with a resident of Big House Clapham either in their flat or off site she will inform her line manager and the manager of Big House of the meeting.

5. Preaching and speaking engagements

5.1 Care will be taken in any public speaking engagements about the Social Work of the WLM (including in leading worship) not to identify specific individuals without their express permission. Composite stories may be used. The chaplain should be alert to whether any such engagements are either recorded or made available as podcasts.

5.2 The chaplain will keep a log of those stories by residents or service users that she has obtained permission to share sensitively.

Ruth Bottoms
Version 2.2 28/05/13
Following discussion by SWC April 2013