

Confidentiality FAQ

Q: What are the limits of confidentiality? If a learner is threatening suicide or to harm someone else what should I do?

A: When a member of staff has these kind of concerns they need to make the learner aware that you may not be able to maintain confidentiality (in less of course that puts themselves or someone else in danger) In exceptional circumstances, there is no obligation to tell the learner, if you feel doing so puts yourself or someone else in more immediate danger - ie that they might actually speed up the action they're threatening. At that point Health & Safety and Duty of Care overrides confidentiality and you should call emergency services.

Q: Why can't I tell a learner's partner or family whether they are attending the course?

A: You don't know the personal circumstances of the learner. There could be very good reasons, such as domestic abuse, why they don't want someone to know their whereabouts. You also don't if the caller is who they say they are. You can tell someone that you don't know if there is a learner of that name, but if they would like to leave a message you will check and pass it on if they are there.

Q: Am I allowed to talk to my manager or colleagues if I am concerned about what someone has disclosed to me?

A: Yes, but you must be clear with them that the information was received in confidence and why you wish to discuss it. It should be discussed in a private place and only cover the aspects which are of concern. Start by discussing without reference to the individual's personal details and see if you can resolve the issue that way.

Q: What if a learner discloses something to me and I think it would be helpful to tell their tutor but they don't want to?

A: You have to respect their right to privacy and to make that decision. Explain the consequences and try to reassure them that it will be treated confidentially.

Got any more confidentiality conundrums?

E-mail kerry.gray@leicester.gov.uk and I'll update the FAQ