

Student Services in King's Gate: confidentiality statement

Student Services offer a confidential service for all clients. Any information that a client discloses to a member of staff from one of the individual support teams will remain confidential to that team. Issues may be discussed with other team members if necessary, but with no-one else without the explicit consent of the client concerned, unless we believe that harm has or might occur to the client or others. Such rare exceptions might include:

- if a client is considered to be at risk of harming themselves or others;
- if a client discloses details about their involvement in child abuse, terrorism, treason or any other criminal offence;
- if a client requests that we pass on information to a third party and signs that he/she agrees to the release of information.

It should be noted that, by law, consent is still required from under 18s in the same way as for adults with regard to matters of data protection and confidentiality.

However, in accordance with statutory requirements, where child protection issues are involved, it is not possible to offer confidentiality to a person under 18 as any disclosures must be reported.

If the need ever arises for confidentiality to be broken, every attempt will be made to discuss this with the client beforehand, unless to do so may worsen the situation for the client.

If any third party, for example a tutor, parent, friend, partner or graduate employer, contacts us to ask for information about any client who may have visited or used Student Services, we will not disclose this information. The enquirer will be advised to ask the client. In exceptional circumstances, we may disclose information only if, in our professional judgment, exceptional circumstances apply, as noted above. If this is the case, information would only be disclosed on a 'need to know' basis.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

Each member of staff in Student Services who has contact with clients will keep records of appointments or conversations with them in accordance with their professional judgement. Both paper and computer records are the property of the University, which in practice devolves responsibility for them to Student Services' managers. The University's obligation to maintain confidentiality and the client's right to decide who should have access to confidential information must be explained to the client and made clear to clients on appropriate application and assessment forms.

Student Services use one shared database to record data and appointments with individual services. All information concerning clients is held and processed by Newcastle University strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Individual services may keep further confidential information on other electronic systems which remain confidential to that team (and the Interaction Team where appropriate). All information from databases and other electronic systems is anonymised when used for statistical purposes. Individual identity is always protected, **except** in the case of statutory financial returns. Additional paper records may also be maintained by some teams, but this is generally limited and paper records are also managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 clients may seek access to records about them, using a Subject Access Request. Further information about these arrangements at the University are available at www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection/ However, if a client requests access to records held within their area, Student Services will normally disclose the relevant records within 5 working days without referring the client to the Subject Access Request procedure. There is a presumption in favour of disclosure unless the preparation of the material will be unduly burdensome to the Service or there is a need to contact third parties for consent – in these circumstances the client will be referred to the Subject Access Request procedure.

For information about any records held by individual teams, clients should speak with a Student Service officer.