

Confidentiality Policy

Statement and Purpose of Policy

Confidential information about Clients, employees or internal affairs of Serenta Homecare may be obtained formally or informally on the basis of trust in the course of conversation or carrying out day-to-day duties. It is recognised that this trust implies that the information will be kept confidential and private and not passed on to others. Serenta Homecare acknowledges the importance of not destroying this trust.

Confidential information may take the form of information that is private and personal to an individual. It may also take the form of information that is commercially or internally confidential to Serenta Homecare.

1. Policy Statement

Serenta Homecare acknowledges the importance of respecting and protecting the right to confidentiality of Clients, employees and job applicants, to maintain the privacy of individuals and the service. Information should be shared on a 'need to know basis only', except when legal requirements prevail, in line with professional practice.

Under normal circumstances, confidential information will not be divulged without the informed consent of the individual concerned or, in the case of those who cannot give this consent, his/her advocate or the Manager in the case of internal Serenta Homecare information.

However, Serenta Homecare acknowledges that there are circumstances where it is required to disclose information without agreement. In these circumstances, Serenta Homecare accepts the need, subject to any legal constraints, to make the individual concerned aware of the information disclosed and the circumstances in which this was necessary.

All confidential information must be always treated with respect and not passed on to others without the informed consent of the person from whom the information was received.

There are circumstances, referred to later, where Serenta Homecare is obliged by law to disclose information. In these areas, it may not always be possible to obtain informed consent.

2. Maintaining Confidentiality

Information obtained about the confidential affairs of Serenta Homecare must not be passed on to others without the permission of the Registered Manager. Please also see Serenta Homecare Whistleblowing Policy.

It is important to be aware of the possibilities of passing on confidential information during informal conversations. Everyone should be aware of slips of the tongue and discussing work related matters in public places such as shops where one may be overheard.

Arrangements should never be made for secrecy between two individuals, as there may be a need to pass on information to protect another person, the service, or the affairs of Serenta Homecare.

3. Sources of Confidential Information

3.1. Clients

Those who work closely with Clients may often become involved in dealing with their correspondence and may learn about their financial and family affairs. They may also be the person they speak to more often than anyone else.

3.2. Employees

The provision of care service can involve working closely together as a team, management and employee can learn a great deal about the strengths and weaknesses, family and health details, sexuality, and finances of those with whom they work. It is important that the privacy of others is respected, that confidences are not broken, and that mutual trust is established and maintained.

3.3. Serenta Homecare

In the course of their work, employees and Clients will have access to internal information, for example internal policies and procedures, development plans and/or other documents produced at Serenta Homecare.

3.4 Individual Service Plans (ISP)

Clients should wherever practicable, keep and control their own ISPs to indicate ownership. All information collected and recorded during the process of preparing the ISP is confidential to the Clients and those who either deliver the service or ensure that the service is doing what it claims to be doing.

3.5 Record Keeping

We keep files on all our clients but only keep relevant information to ensure that the care we offer as an organisation is of the highest quality. The files are only available to employees who need to use them. We keep very personal letters or notes in a secure place. Clients will keep daily records of their care in their own home and will take the responsibility of these.

4. Serenta Homecare Believes the Following

Records required for the protection of Clients and for the effective and efficient running of the service are maintained, are up to date and are accurate.

Clients have access to their records and information about them held by the service, as well as opportunities to help maintain their personal records.

Individual records and service records are kept in a secure fashion are up to date and in good order; and are constructed, maintained, and are used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and other statutory requirements.

Serenta Homecare believes that access to information and security and privacy of data is an absolute right of every Client and that the Clients are entitled to see a copy of all personal information held about them and to correct any error or omission in it.

5. Whistle Blowing

In principal anonymity will be preserved in cases of whistle blowing. However, an investigation process may reveal the source of the information. If it becomes necessary to identify the whistleblower to pursue an investigation, this will be discussed at the earliest stage. See Serenta Homecare Whistle Blowing Policy.

6. Hearings

Information obtained by employees in their role as friend/supporter during a disciplinary/grievance/complaints hearing must be kept confidential.

7. Handling and Storage of Information

All confidential information will be stored in lockable cabinets in a lockable room.

Employees will be made aware of handling such information and that all data should be kept unrecognisable whilst working in the community.

8. Confidential Documents

Papers, files, discs and printouts and all other documents, which are of a confidential nature, must be treated with respect and be kept in locked cupboards. Care must be taken not to leave confidential information open to view by other persons. Data must be erased before discarding or recycling discs.

Whilst in use, confidential documents must never be left unattended. The person in charge of the documentation is responsible for ensuring that it is always returned after use to the place where it is normally kept.

Client documentation should not normally be taken out of the service office.

When confidential information has been authorised for disposal, it must be either shredded or incinerated.

9. Computer Records

Information must be held securely and only accessed by authorised persons using a password. Passwords must not be written down where they may be accidentally disclosed. Computer systems must not be left on and unattended and screens must not be placed where unauthorised persons can see them.

10. Personal Records

Personal files must not be maintained in line with requirements of confidentiality and information about individual employees, including disciplinary issues, must not be disclosed to others without the specific permission of the Manager and/or the person concerned.

Personnel files must not be removed from the offices of Serenta Homecare.

Employees can view their personal file under the Data Protection Act.

The disclosure of employee's medical records requires the specific written consent of the employee involved.

11. Confidential Communications

Information may only be given on the telephone when caller recognition has been established. Otherwise, the caller must be asked to submit a request in writing. In cases of doubt, the advice of the Registered Manager should be sought.

The personal address/telephone number of employees must not be given to telephone callers without employee permission.

Fax and electronic mail should not be regarded as a secure means of communication and may only be used for transmission of confidential information when the recipient gives an undertaking that a responsible person will remove the document from the fax machine immediately on receipt. Confidential transmitted by electronic mail must always be sent subject to the sender and recipient having a unique password.

In confidence, this applies to items that can be opened by the addressee or someone above them in the management line. It also applies to employees and disciplinary files and to sensitive commercial and internal material.

Private addressee only – this applies to items that can only be opened/viewed by the address or in his/her absence by someone who has been specifically authorised to do so.

12. Rights Responsibilities and Roles of Clients and Employees in Maintaining and Breaches of Confidentiality.

Breaches of confidentiality are regarded as serious breaches of trust. Any breach of confidential on the part of an employee may lead to investigation and possible disciplinary action.

Breaches of confidentiality by Clients may lead to suspension or withdrawal of the service, the decision of this nature may only be taken by the Registered Manager.

If a Client feels a confidence has been breached by another Client, employee he/she will have recourse to the separate Serenta Homecare complaints procedure.

13. Right to Withhold Confidential Information

Employees are not entitled to withhold any information that is relevant to their employment and any attempt to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Clients have the right to withhold information that they regard as confidential from service providers, although this may prejudice the quality of the service they receive and ultimately whether Serenta Homecare is able to provide the service.

14. Internal Disclosure

Managers must decide what confidential information needs to be shared for the effective management of the service for which they are responsible. This information should be shared on a 'need to know basis only'.

In the case of internal investigations under the complaints or disciplinary procedures or formally constituted inquiries or investigations, there is an obligation on management and employees of full disclosure to formally authorised investigating offices.

15. External Disclosure

Confidential information about Clients may only be shared with other external organisations or agencies if they are directly involved in providing a service to a Client and if the information is necessary to provide an efficient and effective service. Before any confidential information is disclosed, Managers and the Client (if personal) must be consulted and their agreement obtained.

16. Training

All new employees should be encouraged to read the policies on data protection and on confidentiality.

Existing employees will be offered training to National Training Organisation standards, covering basic information about confidentiality, data protection and access to records.

Training in the correct method for entering information in Clients records should be given to all care employees.

Document Control

Date Approved: July 2026

Target Audience: All Serenta Homecare Staff

Review Date: July 2028

Author: Fran Beardsmore