



## **Respect Confidentiality Policy – Respect Phonenumber and Men’s Advice Line**

### **General principles**

All calls to the Respect Phonenumber and the Men’s Advice Line are treated as confidential unless:

- a caller has requested or consented on information being passed on<sup>1</sup>;
- Helplines Workers are concerned that there is a risk to the welfare or safety of a child or an adult at risk (see ‘Callers who are at risk of domestic violence’ and ‘Callers who are perpetrators of domestic violence’ below)
- we have information about acts of terrorism or bomb warnings;
- helpline workers are threatened or verbally attacked by callers;
- a caller interferes with the delivery of our service.

We do not use technology to identify callers or call recording equipment. Calls are monitored occasionally for quality or training purposes: Helplines management occasionally listen in to calls.

### **Callers who are at risk of domestic violence**

Respect will ensure that callers who are at risk of domestic violence are given complete confidentiality in relation to the perpetrator. This means that Respect will take steps to ensure that perpetrators are never told whether their (ex) partner has had contact with either helpline and in particular that no information on the nature or content of any contact is divulged.

If helpline workers are concerned that there is a risk to the welfare or safety of a child or an adult at risk they may take steps to increase the safety of those individuals by involving another agency. Respect aims to do this alongside the caller and at the very least will inform callers of our intention to share information, where it is possible and safe to do so.

### **Callers who are perpetrators of domestic violence**

In the majority of cases calls from perpetrators of domestic violence will be treated with confidentiality. The personal contact details of callers will not be passed on to any other organisation and the details of calls will not be divulged.

However, domestic violence perpetrators pose a risk to their (ex) partners, children and sometimes others. If helpline workers have reason to be concerned for the safety of any persons due to the caller’s abusive behaviour, they have a duty not to keep confidential those concerns. If helpline workers believe that a perpetrator poses a particular risk, they will share that information with respective Social Services when there are Child Protection concerns and/or the Police and his (ex) partner when the risk is immediate and severe.

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions apply, please read below

Respect will inform callers of our intention to share information about the risk they pose, where it is possible and safe to do so.

## **Principles for sharing information**

If the right information is shared responsibly it can significantly enhance the safety of those at risk of domestic violence (usually women and children). However there is also the potential for harm if that information is not managed appropriately.

Respect will act within the current legal framework with regard to information sharing and data protection. Helplines Workers will consider Respect's Safeguarding Children policy, Safeguarding Adults at risk policy and Respect's Data Protection policy for this purpose.

In all cases workers have a duty to use their own discretion – in consultation with their supervisor and / or line manager – so as not to increase the risk. The main principle upon which information will be shared is to increase the safety of those at risk of domestic violence.

## **Email and postal communication-retention policy**

The following principles apply for email and postal communication:

- A copy of an incoming email and our response(s) to it will be kept for six months and then it will be destroyed in a secure manner from all shared mailboxes, from the sent items subfolder and from the deleted items folder. Helplines Workers need to be mindful that when they reply to an email from a shared mailbox, the reply is often saved in their personal mailbox's sent items subfolder. This needs to be dragged and dropped in the sent items subfolder of the respective Helpline's mailbox – and deleted as described above after six months.
- Original letters will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet until they are destroyed. This is a responsibility of the Senior Support Worker. Electronic copies of our responses to letters will be saved in password-protected folders for two months (accessible only by Helplines staff) before they are destroyed.

## **Training**

Calls may be monitored for quality and training purposes. Respect will ensure that staff are aware of the confidentiality policy.

This confidentiality policy will be part of our publicity material for the helplines and copies of it will be available to the general public.

**Reviewed: May 2018**

**Next review: May 2021**