

LOCAL FRIENDS

Helping ordinary people care for one another

Confidentiality

Every conversation you have with a Local Friends volunteer is confidential. What this means is described below in clear language to the best of our ability; if you feel unsure about the meaning or application of some aspect, please ask us.

Anything I learn from you is confidential; I will do my best to respect your wishes about who can know it, and when; in normal circumstances, I will not share what you tell me without your permission.

Anything I learn from you is confidential. Please note that confidentiality is not the same as total secrecy. We cannot promise total secrecy in all cases because we have to obey the law and there are a few situations where we are obliged to tell responsible people what we know. We also need to care for our volunteers, and do our best to protect their well-being.

I will do my best to respect your wishes about who can know it, and when. If you want my assistance in some way (for example, to seek help with some practical need) then it may be necessary for me to say something about you, to explain why you would appreciate that help. I will only do this if you want me to, and only provide information you are comfortable sharing.

While I am working as a volunteer, there will normally be no other reason for me to repeat anything you tell me, and I will not talk about you, or the things you tell me, with my family, my friends or anyone else.

However, if we continue to meet and the relationship develops from being a volunteer to being a friend, then the usual expectations of friendship will start to apply: I may talk about you in the same way that I talk with you about my other friends, if it is appropriate to the conversation. For example, I may mention places you like to visit, books you have enjoyed reading, or that you too enjoy a certain hobby. A growing understanding of what the other person will not mind (or, sometimes, will actively appreciate) being shared is one of the features of a developing friendship and trust.

In normal circumstances, I will not share what you tell me without your permission. Confidential information will remain confidential – for example, what you say about financial worries or family struggles. But, just as I aim to support you, so I too need help and support, and I will talk about my needs and struggles with my Local Friends supervisor. The type of support I am offering to others will be one of the things I talk about, but I will not go into unnecessary detail.

There is one very rare exception to this policy: I will share information when I am required to do so by law or by the need to prevent harm to someone. This would be required, for example, if I was told about ongoing child abuse, or about a credible threat to someone's life: in such a situation, my duty of care to these people takes priority over my duty of confidentiality towards you.