



Position statement on Information Governance and Confidentiality

Ethical dilemmas create tension within professional teams and misperceptions amongst the public. As an organisation Trinity Hospice and Palliative Care Services has, therefore, decided to make clear position statements on a number of common, challenging ethical dilemmas including the issues around maintaining confidentiality and managing the information we hold about people. These are intended to work as a succinct guide on the issue for members of staff and users of our service.

This statement takes into account opinions expressed by staff, the current law as well as predictions of the impact of the statement on patient care across the family of services that make up Trinity Hospice and Palliative Care Services.

Statement

In order to deliver specialist palliative care to our local community the organisation holds personal information on patients and their families both electronically and in paper form. There can be tension between respecting an individual's right to keep personal information confidential and the need for the organisation to communicate some of that information to others to enable them to deliver care or make appropriate decisions. Wherever possible we will ensure that the individual whose information needs to be shared knows what information is being shared and with who. Where there is uncertainty about the amount or kind of information that should be shared we will seek the consent of the patient to do so, explaining clearly why this is being requested and the consequences of withholding such information. The main exceptions to this will be where there are suspicions that a crime may have been committed or there is a safeguarding issue when consent will not be sought in sharing that information with the appropriate authorities

The organisation also holds personal information on individuals who have made donations to the hospice or who have expressed an interest in the work the hospice does. This information is essential in enabling the organisation to raise the charitable funds it needs to keep the service running.

The organisation commits itself to keeping only the personal, identifiable information on individuals that it needs to deliver care effectively and raise appropriate funds. The organisation has decided that clinical information will be held separately from donor information, even though the information held on some individuals may be the same.

All personal information will be checked regularly for accuracy and kept securely with clear processes for which staff can access which pieces of information.

No identifiable, personal information will be shared with anyone else including family members except with the expressed permission of the individual concerned. If the individual concerned is unable to give their consent then the senior doctor and nurse in charge of that patient's care will seek to act in that individual's best interests following the procedures laid down in the Mental Capacity Act.

All staff employed and volunteers used by the hospice will sign a code of conduct which includes a clear statement around maintaining confidentiality.

The hospice has in place the necessary procedures to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. The Caldicott Guardian for the organisation is the Medical Director.

Any breach of an individual's confidentiality will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

Susan Salt
Medical Director

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