

Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church (BSBC)

Confidentiality Policy

1. General principles

- 1.1. BSBC recognises that employees, volunteers and trustees gain information about individuals and organisations during the course of their work or activities. In most cases such information will not be stated as confidential and colleagues may have to exercise common sense and discretion in identifying whether information is expected to be confidential. This policy aims to give guidance but if in doubt, seek advice from your line manager or trustee body.
- 1.2. Colleagues are able to share information with their line manager and other colleagues in order to discuss issues and seek advice.
- 1.3. Colleagues should avoid exchanging personal information or comments (gossip) about individuals with whom they have a professional relationship.
- 1.4. Colleagues should avoid talking about organisations or individuals in social settings.
- 1.5. Information given to staff, trustees or volunteers acting on behalf of BSBC is considered to be given to BSBC as an organisation rather than to the individual staff member, trustee or volunteer. In order to give the best possible service to BSBC members and congregation, it is sometimes desirable to share information with other colleagues in the organisation.
- 1.6. Constructive liaison with other organisations is sometimes essential if individuals and groups are to be offered an effective service by BSBC. However, confidential matters must not be discussed outside of BSBC without the prior permission of the individual or organisation.
- 1.7. Where there is a legal duty on BSBC to disclose information, the person to whom the confidentiality is owed will be informed that disclosure has or will be made.

2. Why information is held

- 2.1. Most information held by BSBC relates to members of the Church and congregation, volunteers, employees, trustees or services which support or fund them.
- 2.2. Information may be kept to enable BSBC to understand the personal circumstances of individuals in order to deliver the most appropriate services.
- 2.3. BSBC has a role in putting people in touch with others and keeps contact details which may be passed on to any enquirer, except where that individual expressly requests that the details remain confidential.
- 2.4. Information about ethnicity and disability of users is only kept for the purposes of monitoring our equal opportunities policy.

3. Access to information

- 3.1. Information is confidential to BSBC as an organisation but may be passed to colleagues, line managers or trustees to ensure the best quality service for users.
- 3.2. Where information is sensitive, (e.g. where it may involve disputes or legal issues), it will be confidential to the employee dealing with the case and their line manager. Such information should be clearly labelled 'Confidential' and should state the names of the colleagues entitled to access the information and the name of the individual or group who may request access to the information.
- 3.3. Colleagues will not withhold information from their line manager unless it is purely personal.
- 3.4. Users may have sight of BSBC records held in their name or that of their organisation. The request must be in writing to the Membership Secretary (?) giving 14 days' notice and be signed by the individual, or in the case of an organisation's records, by the Chair or Membership Secretary. Sensitive information as outlined in para 3.2 will only be made available to the person or organisation named on the file.
- 3.5. When photocopying or working on confidential documents, colleagues must ensure they are not seen by people in passing. This also applies to information on computer screens.

4. Storing information

- 4.1. BSBC keeps non-confidential information using paper files and computers. Confidential information is maintained with an appropriate level of security, in accordance with the Data Protections Act and this policy, which will adequately protect information about individuals that is held in the systems.
- 4.2. Information about volunteers and other individuals may be kept by one individual. These individuals must ensure other appropriate individuals know how to gain access in case of emergency.
- 4.3. Employees' personnel information will be kept in filing cabinets and will be accessible to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.
- 4.4. In an emergency situation, the Membership Secretary may authorise access to files by other people.

5. Duty to disclose information

- 5.1. There is a legal duty to disclose some information including:
 - 5.1.1. Child abuse, which will be reported to the appropriate authorities.
 - 5.1.2. Financial irregularities, Drug trafficking, money laundering, acts of terrorism or treason and other criminal acts which will be disclosed to the police.
- 5.2. In addition a colleague believing an illegal act has taken place, or that a user is at risk of harming themselves or others, must report this to the Church Officers who will report it to the appropriate authorities.
- 5.3. Users should be informed of this disclosure.

6. Disclosures

- 6.1 BSBC complies fully with the CRB Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information.
- 6.2 Disclosure information is always kept separately from an applicant's personnel file in secure storage with access limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties. It is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.
- 6.3 Documents will be kept for a year and then destroyed by secure means. Photocopies will not be kept. However, BSBC may keep a record of the date of issue of a Disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of Disclosure requested, the position for which the Disclosure was requested, the unique reference number of the Disclosure and the details of the recruitment decision taken.

7. Breach of confidentiality

- 7.1. Employees who are dissatisfied with the conduct or actions of other colleagues or BSBC should raise this with their line manager using the grievance procedure, if necessary, and not discuss their dissatisfaction outside of BSBC.
- 7.2. Colleagues accessing unauthorised files or breaching confidentiality will face disciplinary action. Ex-employees breaching confidentiality may face legal action.

8. Whistle-blowing

- 8.1 Where anyone has concerns about the use of BSBC funds, he or she may refer directly to the Church Officers outside the usual grievance procedure.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies/documents:

- Data Protection Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Whistle-blowing Policy

This policy was adopted by the Trustees on 8th July 2019 and will be reviewed every three years.