



the brain injury association

## **Helpline confidentiality statement**

### **1. Introduction**

Confidentiality is a matter of consideration and respect for the people we work with and for. It relates to sensitive information that we receive or have access to in the course of our work.

This statement relates specifically to the Headway helpline, which is a confidential service. In order to provide a service that meets the needs of people that contact us, the helpline provides a safe environment where people can speak openly and fully, safe in the knowledge that safeguards are in place should we believe someone is at risk of serious harm.

The protection of a person's data is a fundamental right. Under the Human Rights Act 1998, everyone has the right to respect for their private and family life, their home and their correspondence.

This includes respect for an individual's private and confidential information, particularly when storing and sharing data. This right can be limited in certain circumstances, but any limitation must balance the competing interests of an individual and of the community as a whole.

All helpline records are stored in accordance with data protection laws and good practice and we will only breach confidentiality in exceptional circumstances.

### **2. Anonymity**

People that contact our helpline do not have to give their name. If someone feels comfortable doing so they can use a pseudonym when contacting us. However, if people want us to get in touch with someone (i.e GP or social worker) on their behalf we will need their real name and possibly other personal details.

Our telephone system shows the telephone number of incoming calls and we are able to retrieve the telephone number of anyone that leaves us a message on our answer phone. If anyone telephones the Headway helpline and wishes their number to remain anonymous they would need to withhold the number before placing the call.

If someone telephones the helpline our number will not show up on itemised bills.

If we call you, for example when returning a voicemail left on our answer machine, our telephone number will not be displayed on your phone. This will show as an incoming call from a private number.

If we return your call, we will not disclose what we are calling about to anyone but the original caller; that is, if a family member answers the call, we will only disclose that we are calling from a confidential service and will try again later.

If the helpline sends someone an email this will appear as from 'Helpline' or [helpline@headway.org.uk](mailto:helpline@headway.org.uk).

If we send any letters or if people request, we send them something in the post the item will be sent in a plain envelope and our logo will not be visible on the outer package of any post.

### **3. Our processes and record keeping**

We do not keep audio recordings of any of our telephone conversations.

Basic details of each call are recorded and stored securely on our system, which is not accessible to anyone outside of the service. These records are kept in order to provide continuity of care to repeat callers.

We also record some statistical information in order to monitor and improve our service. For example, we keep records on age, gender, how someone's injury was sustained and from which area or country of the UK they are contacting.

### **4. Exceptions**

There are some exceptional circumstances when the helpline will need to break confidentiality. These include but are not limited to:

- We receive a court order requiring us to share information
- We receive a call about acts of terrorism or bomb warnings
- Someone threatens the safety of our volunteers or staff, or threatens the effective delivery of the helpline service
- If we feel that anyone will be at risk of serious harm if we do not break confidentiality

Breaching confidentiality may include calling crisis mental health teams or emergency services, particularly if we feel the caller may be at risk of harming themselves or others.