

SANE's Confidentiality Policy

If you are reading this then you probably want to understand more about confidentiality and why at times we may have to break it. Confidentiality is very important and can be reassuring to know that what you share won't be repeated.

We pride ourselves at SANE on our confidential services where people can confide in us about their mental health and receive help, support, guidance and information either for their own mental health or for help with supporting someone else.

However, there are times when we have to adhere to the law and break confidentiality because something we are told makes us think someone under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult is at risk.

We don't break confidentiality lightly and we will always make as thorough an assessment as we can. We will always aim to involve you in any assessment we make and will always try and tell you before we share information you have told us with another agency.

When would you share information about me with other people?

We would consider the need to share information about you with other agencies if you share something with us that makes us think

- You or someone else is being hurt
- Your life or the life of someone else is in danger.
- You have harmed someone else or you plan to harm someone else
- If you ask us to tell someone else that you are being hurt, you are in danger or you have hurt someone

If you are under 18 we may also share information if:

- We are concerned that your mental health is poor; are in a current crisis and not in touch with mental health services
- We are concerned that you could seriously hurt yourself
- You are having suicidal thoughts and that you may act on those thoughts

Who would you tell if you break confidentiality?

If SANE decides that what you have said or written makes us think you or someone else may be at risk; we will always try and contact you to tell you that we will have to share what you have said with someone who can help.

It will usually be Social Services we contact to share the information unless we feel there is an emergency right now or that a crime has taken place and in that instance we would contact the Police.

SANE, St Mark's Studios, 14 Chillingworth Road, Islington, London, N7 8QJ T: 020 3805 1790

W: <http://www.sane.org.uk>

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Do you know my name?

All our services are confidential, whilst we will usually ask for your first name you don't have to give it. We will never share your name unless we think you are at risk or you have told us about someone else at risk.

Do you know any other personal details?

We don't know this information unless you choose to share it. We receive limited personal information via the channel you choose to contact us through. For example we will know your mobile phone number if you share it with us in order to receive text messages from Textcare.

There may be times when we are very worried about your safety or someone else's safety and we need to tell someone about what is happening (see section above for when this may be) If this is the case, there is a way that we can request your phone number, IP address (a number unique to your computer), or email address, which means that we may be able to locate you and get help to you. We have guidelines about when we can do this and we would always try and talk to you first, before we pass this information on.

Do you keep notes of my contact with you?

We keep some records of those using SANE Services. If we offer regular support to an individual we keep records to inform the support we offer and to ensure we can offer the individual the most helpful service possible from us. We only record information that you share with us and details of the support we have offered. We keep all records for 6 years following your last contact with us, after which point they are destroyed. SANE uses a confidential electronic system to store the records we hold and we use anonymised data from this for research and learning purposes, to inform future service development and sometimes help raise awareness of SANE and our work.

Will you tell someone if I am suicidal?

If you are 18 or over

We will not break confidentiality because you tell us you are suicidal or if you tell us you have a plan to take your life. We would break confidentiality if you tell us you have an immediate plan to take your life that would place the lives of others at risk. We would also break confidentiality if you asked us to.

If you are under 18

SANE will only break confidentiality if we believe that it is likely that you will act on the suicidal thoughts you are having. This means that we think you have a plan to take your life, either today or in the future. If we believe you have a plan to take your life we will share this with social services.

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It's not enough just to tell us you are not going to do it if everything else you have said shows that actually you are really in danger. You need to help us genuinely understand whether you are at risk or not. You can do this by being as clear as you can about your feelings and plans throughout the conversation if we contact you. It is helpful for us to know whether you feel safe and if you have access or contact with any mental health or social work services in your area. With this information, we can make an assessment as to whether we need to make the decision to contact those specialist agencies/services in your area that could provide you with the support you need.

If I contact you about my mental illness and I tell you I am caring for children would you break confidentiality?

We would not break confidentiality unless we had reason to believe the children in your care were at risk of harm. We may ask you some questions about the children you are caring for and it is helpful if you can be really clear with us about how you are caring for the children.

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