



Oxford University Peer Support Programme

Code of Confidentiality

A Code of Confidentiality is necessary for a peer support programme to be successful. The following explains the concept of 'confidential information', the circumstances in which you can share such information, and how you should do so.

Principles of Confidentiality

In general, everything that someone talks to you about in your role as peer supporter should be kept between you and the person whom you are supporting, whether you are using your skills formally or informally.

There may be situations when you need to share confidential information for the safety of the person seeking help, the wider community, or yourself. Depending on the urgency of the situation, it may be appropriate to share confidential information with your Peer Support Supervisor, or a member of staff within your College or Department Welfare Team. It is not appropriate to share confidential information with other peer supporters.

Sharing confidential information

In the following situations you will need to share confidential information:

- If someone has attempted or is talking about attempting suicide
- If someone is talking about harming themselves or another person
- If there is evidence of serious mental health problems
- If there is evidence of serious self-harm
- If there are welfare concerns for someone under 18 years old

Urgent situations

If anyone is at immediate risk of serious harm you will need to contact a member of staff within your College Welfare Team. If a situation arises out of office hours, your College will have an emergency contact, for example a Junior Dean.

Name and contact details of the nominated peer support welfare link in your college or department:

Dr Jane Hoverd, Senior Tutor, Linacre College

senior.tutor@linacre.ox.ac.uk

01865 281604

Out of hours: 07837 142095 (Emergency Only)

Other situations

There will be times when you will need to talk to someone about your concerns regarding a student you are supporting. You can do this by talking to your Peer Support Supervisor, designated Peer Support link person, or a member of staff within your College or Department Welfare Team.



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In supervision you will have opportunity to talk about the issues encountered in your role as a peer supporter and how you feel about these interactions. Anything shared in supervision sessions needs to be done anonymously - you must not give the person's name or reveal any other identifying information about them (who they hang out with, what they look like, etc.)

If you are unsure how serious the situation is, speak to a member of staff within your College or Department Welfare Team or your Peer Support Supervisor.

As a peer supporter, you are in a position to help students think about whether there is someone in college or the department who would be helpful to talk to, e.g. Tutor, Supervisor, DGS, Junior Dean, Dean, Senior Tutor, Chaplain, Nurse, Doctor, or specialist voluntary groups¹.

You are not alone!

It is important to remember that you are not alone in your work as a peer supporter, and it is important to pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. You have a range of support as a peer supporter from your peers, supervisor and people within your college or department. If you need support or feel burdened by something you have been told it is important that you get in touch with your supervisor, bring it to supervision or speak to a member of staff within your College or Department Welfare Team.

How to share appropriately

Once you have decided that you need to share confidential information, let the person seeking support know your decision. Explain why information needs to be shared, and that you will support them through the process. Wherever possible, disclosure of confidential information should be with the student's consent; however, there may be instances where you will need to share without it.

Encourage the student to approach the college nurse, GP, or Counselling Service themselves. If they cannot manage it alone, you can accompany them if you think this would be appropriate and if you feel comfortable with it. It is important that they make appointments themselves, unless it is an emergency situation.

Discuss the situation with your supervisor. Let them know why you have shared confidential information, and what progress the student is making. Your supervisor is there to support you so that you are not left feeling being burdened by, or responsible for someone in a difficult situation. Together you will decide in what way you will carry on supporting the person who has come to you, if appropriate.

Remember, the need to share confidential information does not arise often, but you need to know what to do if such a situation occurs. While it can feel difficult to share confidential information, remember that by doing so you are protecting the person seeking help, yourself and others in the college.

Policy

Sharing information that should be kept confidential or not sharing information, as defined in this code, may lead to your immediate suspension or removal from the Peer Support Programme.

¹ A list of specialist voluntary groups is available at: www.ox.ac.uk/students/help