Listening Services – Confidentiality Policy

Sift offers free, confidential, anonymous support to people anywhere in the UK through our helpline, Text, email and webchat. Calls and chats are taken by trained staff who are there to listen, support, inform and signpost. The service is open from:

- Monday & Thursday, Helpline 6-9 pm
- Monday to Friday, Text 6-9 pm

Outside these hours, please visit www.sift.org.uk for information on alternative services.

On rare occasions, we may be required to break confidentiality. These instances are clearly outlined in this document.

Security and Privacy of Messages

We employ reasonable security controls (including encryption) to help protect your information. Despite these protections, the platforms we use remain an imperfectly secure environment. We try hard, but Sift cannot guarantee protection from intruders, hackers or interceptors. You use the Service and submit information to Sift at your own risk.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the undertaking between the service and the caller/chatter that details of the contact or nature of the calls will not be disclosed outside of the team delivering the helpline service except in the exceptional circumstances outlined below. Confidentiality is based on the common law ‘duty of confidence’ and is shared between the caller/texter and the helpline service, not the individual worker.

Statistical operational information is recorded automatically such as the time of connection, queue and call duration. The general geographical location, the age and gender of chatters will be requested at the end of any webchat session. However, on a call, this demographic information is only recorded if the caller discloses it. The topics discussed and outcomes of all contacts are also noted so that commissioners of the service can be informed of the impact of their support.

Note, this policy applies only to the service provided directly by the helpline, text or webchat.

Breaking Confidentiality

Confidentiality will only be broken in exceptional circumstances. Users of the Sift helpline are always encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and to get help from emergency services when necessary. Sift helpline will not summon help for third parties.

Confidentiality will only be broken without the consent of the caller/chatter:

- When the helpline staff understands/is told that a person is actively suicidal, has a plan and is undertaking it now, then the helpline will breach confidentiality without consent if information necessary for emergency services to respond has already been disclosed to the helpline.
- When the helpline staff understands/is told that an act of self-harm has become life-threatening, then confidentiality would be breached without consent.
- When the helpline staff understands/is told by a person that they have seriously harmed a third party and put that person's life in danger.
- In all cases, confidentiality is only broken if there is a serious risk of imminent death or if they are being abused.
- When a caller informs the helpline of an impending act of terrorism.
- When the helpline is obliged to give information to Police or other Authorities with the power to demand this.
- There is a legal requirement to provide information following receipt of a court order requiring us to share information or are required to do so by nation-specific legislation.
- A user threatens the safety of Sift Helpline staff or the delivery of our service or any other third person about whom the user makes specific threats of harm.

IP addresses

With respect to the webchat service, the helpline can't know the IP address of any web chatter and therefore cannot summon emergency help without the chatter's consent. This will be stated to the user, and it will be strongly suggested to them that they need to summon help themselves, if they believe they need it.

Terms of Service

When you send a message to Sift to initiate the first text/webchat conversation, you will receive a confidentiality and privacy statement. You will not receive this statement again unless it is deemed necessary.

Before using or accessing our service (Phone line, text or Webchat), please read both the Confidentiality Policy and the Privacy Policy. By accessing or using the Service, you agree to these policies. These policies govern your access and use of the Service. If you don't agree to these policies, you may not use the Service.

Changes in Terms

The Terms may be changed from time to time. The most up-to-date Terms will always be the ones that are posted here. Changes to the Terms of Service will be effective immediately upon our posting them here on our website.

On each separate occasion that you first send a message to Sift Helpline to initiate a text/webchat conversation, you will receive some automated reply messages with a link to our current Confidentiality & Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, so you may review them before continuing to use our service. By using our service after receiving those automated messages, you agree to the practices outlined in the current Terms.

In order to protect your confidentiality, we never initiate direct contact with you. We are therefore unable to notify you directly of any changes to the Terms. Your use of the Service after such changes have been posted shall constitute your acceptance of the revised Terms.

Surveys and Feedback

At the end of your conversation, you may receive a link to take a survey to share your feedback. This is to help us learn from you and improve our service. Some policies surrounding the study:

- Responses are anonymous.
- You do not have to answer all of the questions.
- Any notes that you add might be used for training.
- What you say won't be linked to your conversation and won't affect your ability to use Sift services.