

Our ref: FOI 1505

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

Information regarding the restricted section in a service user's file has now been considered and the information requested is enclosed.

I wish to make the following request under FOI legislation.

All questions relate to service user's files held by the Trust in the area of adoption reunion and post adoption services.

What is held in the restricted section of a service user's file?

- Restricted sections in files normally hold information about the client written or reported by a third party who has not given consent to share.
- Other documents could include references undertaken as part of a fostering/adoption assessment. Historically police checks would have been held although not the case currently.
- Panel minutes such as adoption panel minute may be held in restricted section if containing 3rd party information
- Privileged Legal Correspondence
- Third party/ex- partner checks may also be held within the restricted section

Who decides what is held in a restricted section?

The case social worker and their manager agree the decision as to what is held in a restricted section. Information held in a restricted section may also be the wish of a third party if they do not want their identity to be shared.

Who has access to the restricted section of a service user's file.

Only those staff who are involved with the service user will have access to the restricted section.

What procedures must a Trust employee follow to have access to a restricted section of a service user's file

If a staff member is requesting access to a service user's file that is no longer active they will make a formal request to Closed Records asking for the file and outlining the reasons why they are requesting the file.

Access to files can only be for a valid business reason whether file is opened or closed.

If stored records staff are satisfied with the request, the file will be forwarded securely to the enquirer and returned to closed records once completed. The Trust has systems in place to monitor who accesses electronic records and if necessary can check if there is a valid business reason for doing so.

Are amendments to social work notes generally held in the restricted section of a service users file or are they stored alongside the original case notes.

Amendment to social work notes will be recorded in the recording section of the file. However depending on the information recorded it may be more appropriate to place the information in the restricted section i.e. if the person providing the information did not wish to be identified. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis

Is there Trust policy/guidelines on the purpose and use of the 'restricted section' of a service user's file? If so are these available to the public?

The Trust guidance and Policies in relation to the purpose and use of restricted section can be found in:

Administrative Systems Recording Policy, Standards and Criteria
Regional Policy for Northern Ireland Health and
Social Care Trusts (2015)