

Confidentiality guidelines for retreat teams and Dhanakosa team members

Note: General issues regarding the handling of personal information are dealt with under the [Privacy Policy](#) as are the reasons for and rules relating to the recording of sensitive information.

This note is general guidance to help retreat teams and Dhanakosa team members respond to situations where people on retreat may reveal sensitive information either in one-to-one situations or small groups. See also the *Inclusion and Exclusions Guidance*.

This note applies to people who are:

- Working in any capacity on a retreat team
- Members of the Dhanakosa support team
- Order members on retreat, who although they may not officially be part of the team may be regarded by other retreatants as having some status or influence through their ordination.

General principle

Within the spiritual community the general principles that govern communication are the precepts, and particularly the speech precepts. However, notions of confidentiality and privacy are widespread in society and in some instances legally protected. It is important that all information should be handled respectfully and that people have a right to privacy and self-determination.

As a retreat team member, Dhanakosa team member or volunteer you should not accept absolute confidentiality. Such a situation potentially puts you and others at risk. You should make this clear as soon as possible in any conversation where confidentiality is being asked for, or you suspect it is being assumed.

It is expected that you will share relevant information with relevant other members of the team to maintain appropriate support and protection. This document should help you decide what to share when and with whom. Recording of information or sharing out-with the Dhanakosa team or retreat team should be done in accordance with the [Safeguarding Policy](#), and the [Privacy Policy](#).

When should you talk to others?

You should share information you have been given if you believe it falls under one or more of the following categories:

- You believe the person may be considered vulnerable, and you have concerns about their safety or welfare
- You believe another person is vulnerable, and have concerns about their safety or welfare
- The information you have been given is pertinent to that person's support needs on the retreat, or may be pertinent to another person's support needs on the retreat

- The information you have been given may have an adverse effect on the retreat as a whole, or affect how the retreat leaders or other team members hold or respond to situation arising on the retreat
- You feel you need additional advice on how you respond to the information you have been given
- You feel you need support in holding the information you have been given

You should be aware that if the information you have been given includes disclosure of sexual or violent crimes, or crimes involving children you have a duty to disclose this to the Dhanakosa Safeguarding Officer (Subhanaya) who may have to report it to the Police.

Who should you share information with?

When deciding what to share and who to share it with consider if anyone's welfare is at risk. Also, consider whether there is a risk of an adverse effect on the retreat as a whole, or other individuals on the retreat.

If the information is of general relevance to the retreat as a whole, or it is clear that the individual concerned would be better supported or protected if everyone on the team knew, then tell the retreat team in the team meeting. If the information is more specific, particularly sensitive, or you are not sure, share it with the main retreat leaders, or a senior member of the Dhanakosa team.

If the information is of a type that you find you need support with yourself, you should feel free to get that support from where you need it. We would recommend that you share the information with one other individual whom you feel may have the necessary experience to help you decide what to do next in the first instance.

Make it clear the information was given to you in confidence, so it can be handled similarly respectfully. If you believe someone may be at risk (whether the individual revealing the information or someone else), you have a duty to disclose this information to the protection Safeguarding Officer (Subhanaya) or if not available the most senior member of the Dhanakosa team. See also the [Safeguarding Policy](#).

What should you not do?

- Never put pressure on people to share information
- Never use information you have been given to intimidate, manipulate or coerce people.

Be aware of the tendency to gossip and share people's personal information because there is some sort of excitement in it. Respect people's privacy and do not share what does not need to be shared. Personal details that are not relevant to someone's welfare, the welfare of others, their support needs, or the retreat as a whole, can stay private.

When should information be recorded?

If you have concerns about safeguarding, your concerns should be recorded in accordance with the [Safeguarding Policy](#) and brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Officer (Subhanaya) or Centre Director (Nayaka).

If you have more general concerns that an individual's support needs or behaviour that either:

- may require additional support or,
- render them unsuitable for certain types of retreat (either because of concerns about the welfare or dignity of that individual or others, or because they can reasonably be considered prone to behaviour that may be disruptive)

It may be relevant to record this information so that other retreat teams have access to narrative of previous experience.

This should be done in consultation with a senior member of the Dhanakosa retreat leaders group (Nayaka, Amoghavira, Subhanaya) in accordance with the *Inclusion and Exclusion Guidance* and the relevant section of the [Privacy Policy](#).

When should you tell someone you are sharing what you have been told with someone else?

There are no hard and fast rules about this. However, if in a conversation you are in receipt of specific or sensitive information and begin to feel it might be appropriate or necessary for you to share the information you have received for any of the reasons given above, it is generally better to explore that with the person you are talking to there and then so they have an opportunity to allow the disclose guidelines to influence what they reveal to you.

It may also help you to balance the right to privacy and dignity of the individual confiding in you with the need to know, when deciding what to share. Where information is of a more general nature, but you can see it would be better if other members of the team were made aware of it, it is not normally necessary tell someone you intend to share the information.

If recording information under the Safeguarding Policy or the Privacy Policy, it is important to note whether the individual is aware you are recording information about them. And, be aware that they have a right to request access to any information we have on our records.

If you do tell someone you are recording information about them or intend to share information you have been given make sure you communicate that you are coming from a place of care, and that you are doing it because you take them seriously.