
Policy: Accountability to clients and access to files

Updated January 2014

This policy should be read in conjunction with Transform's Data Protection Policy and Confidentiality Policy. The policy was reviewed in consultation with Transform clients in December 2013.

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines on how Transform will ensure that it remains accountable to all its clients, including client's rights to access information held on them.

1. Accountability to clients:

- 1.1 Clients who are Transform tenants or licensees in flats, shared houses and hostels are to be provided with full written information about the terms of their Licence and Tenancy Agreements. The terms, conditions, rights and obligations contained in the Agreements are fully explained verbally at interview and before the Licence or Tenancy Agreement is signed. Each new tenant/licensee is also given a handbook, setting out a range of information including rights and responsibilities. This ensures that all clients, with varying degrees of vulnerability, are fully informed. Where necessary staff will include any carers/parents/care manager. This also includes information on the complaints and feedback procedure.
- 1.2 In the case of floating support services, each client is given a leaflet setting out what they may expect from the service, the professional boundaries that Transform work to and what to do in the event of a complaint. Rights and responsibilities as a client of Transform are clearly displayed in the local office, are available in the client handbook and will be provided to clients on request. Clients are required to sign a form giving their consent for Transform to share information in certain circumstances.
- 1.3 In previous years, Transform set out a 'Local Offer' for clients in supported accommodation. This was initially in response to a requirement of the Tenant Services Authority and, more recently, by the Homes & Communities Agency. The Local Offer included target response times for things like maintenance. Transform still sets out clear maintenance response times and, in addition, has published a 'Promises Document' to replace the Local Offer. This is in response to client feedback and to make us more demonstrably accountable. Each year Transform will review its performance against targets and our Promises document, publish the results in an Annual Review and communicate with as many clients as possible about the results and what the targets and promises for the following year should be.

1.4 In the case of accommodation-based services, personal accommodation charge statements showing the balance of the account, arrears of Housing Benefit (where applicable) and personal arrears will be provided quarterly.

2. Access to files:

- 2.1 All clients can have access to information written about them and held by Transform in individual client files and also on the Pyramid system (Pyramid is the name of the software used by Transform to log details of the support provided to clients). If a client asks to read their personal file or Pyramid record, an appointment should be made with their keyworker in advance. No third party reports (i.e. by social worker, psychiatrist, probation officer etc.) can be shown unless permission is sought from the source of that information, and this must be explained to the client at the time of request.
- 2.2 Appointments must be made approximately one week in advance giving time for the keyworker to go through the file and Pyramid record with a more senior member of staff to highlight areas that the individual could find difficult and to discuss ways of approaching such issues with them.
- 2.3 A client will not be able to view information held on them where access to information about other clients could be seen. An example of this might be a data base report or spreadsheet with the names of multiple clients displayed. In this case, the PM/SHM will issue a printed version of the data with the names of other clients blocked out. Another example is the daily log that some teams keep.
- 2.4 Files should only be read by the client with the keyworker present. On no account should the files be taken away by the individual. However, where it is possible to produce a Pyramid record that does not disclose third party information or breach the confidentiality of other clients, consideration should be given to providing the client with a copy of the Pyramid report. A request must always be brought to the attention of a more senior member of staff.
- 2.5 Clients who have left Transform accommodation or whose service has ceased may also ask to see their personal files or computer records, following the same procedures as above.
- 2.6 Where the support service provided by Transform is transferred to another support provider, Transform will work alongside the new support provider to ensure continuity of care by providing relevant information regarding the client and their support needs.
- 2.7 If a client does not agree with any details on their file and fails to reach an agreement with their support worker they should be encouraged to make a complaint using Transform's complaints procedure.