



ME CONNECT CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

As part of The ME Association, ME Connect manages and responds to communications from people with ME/CFS, their families, Carers, health professionals and interested others.

ME Connect is managed by staff members and is supported by volunteers and Trustees. Responses are delivered in four different formats: telephone, email, letter and facsimile.

DEFINITIONS

“MEC service”-means all persons authorised by The ME Association to handle information

“service user”-means any person making an inquiry to the MEC service

“confidential information”-means information about the service user and the content of their communication to the MEC service

“volunteers”-means all those persons authorised by The ME Association to communicate directly with a service user

ME Connect is committed to providing a confidential service to its service user. Maintaining confidentiality is an essential part of the service helping to create a safe environment within which service users feel able to communicate freely. Confidentiality is ‘within the MEC service’.

EXCEPTIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY

- Where not to do so would be breaking the law
- Where any information is provided concerning terrorism
- Where there is a perceived risk to the safety of any person

THE DATA PROTECTION ACT

ME Connect will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and all subsequent amendments and regulations made thereunder.

CONFIDENTIALITY FOR THE SERVICE USER

The ‘ME Connect-Confidentiality Policy-Public Statement’ appears on The ME Association website and the Volunteer website. The Statement is attached to this Policy and can be read to the service user if required.

- Without written consent from the service user, no information will be disclosed outside the MEC service. Any statistical information about ME Connect will be released in anonymous format.
- The name and address of the service user will only be used to send requested information to the service user and for no other purpose whatsoever.
- The MEC service will not use a caller display facility or the 1471 service.

- Confidential information will not be discussed where there is any possibility that persons outside the MEC service may hear such discussion.
- Confidential information, either on paper or on screen, will not be left where it can be seen by unauthorised persons.
- Confidential information must be kept in a secure place and retained only as long as necessary.
- If appropriate, the service user may be informed that ME Connect's telephone number may be shown on their itemised telephone bill or can be accessed by others using the 'redial' button on the service user's telephone.

ACCESS TO FILES AND LOG SHEETS

ME Connect is committed to effective recording of information to enable it to measure take-up of the service, for monitoring statistical information, for evaluation and training purposes and for the development of the ME Connect service and the policies of both ME Connect and The ME Association.

A service user has a right to see any personal information about them held by The ME Association. On receipt of a written request to the Head Office (hereinafter called "the Head Office") of the ME Association, any personal information held will be provided. This excludes the section of ME Connect's log sheet 'Other information for Volunteer Supervisor'. This section is exclusively for monitoring the service and supervising the volunteer. It does not contain personal information about the service user.

STORAGE OF LOG SHEETS

- A volunteer is required to keep log sheets in a safe, secure place until they are posted to the volunteer's supervisor.
- The volunteer's supervisor is to keep log sheets in a safe, secure place until they are posted to the Head Office.
- The Head Office is to store the log sheets in a locked filing drawer. They are to be shredded or incinerated after a period of 12 months.

CONFIDENTIALITY FOR THE VOLUNTEER

The addresses and telephone numbers of all volunteers are kept at the Head Office and the ME Connect office. These details are not shared with other parties. Volunteer telephone numbers are logged on to a secure telephone network to enable them to take ME Connect calls. Callers to ME Connect cannot gain personal information about the volunteer other than their first name or an agreed pseudonym. Personal details of any member within the MEC service will not be disclosed to the service user.

CONFIDENTIALITY FOR OTHERS

Where a service user makes an enquiry on behalf of someone else, such as a friend, relative or employee - ME Connect will send information only to the service user who may, in turn, pass it on to others. ME Connect will not send information to others at the request of the service user. Any such request to do so will be politely declined and the reason explained.

ME CONNECT-CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY-PUBLIC STATEMENT

Confidentiality is one of the fundamental principles of the ME Connect (“ MEC”) service

The MEC service includes all persons authorised by The ME Association to handle information

MEC offers confidentiality to enquirers. Nothing learned from enquirers will be disclosed to anyone outside the MEC service without the express permission of the enquirer subject to the exceptions listed below.

Exceptions to the confidentiality rule are:

- Where there is a perceived risk to the safety of any person
- Where not to do so would be breaking the law
- Where any information is provided concerning terrorism

MEC will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and all subsequent amendments and regulations made thereunder.

April 2008