



## Access to your records

If you have ever received any services from Dorset County Council Adult and Community Services there will be information about you in our records that will have helped us try to meet your particular needs.

### **The right to access**

The law gives you the right of access to personal information held about you by Adult and Community Services on both written and computerised files. This factsheet tells you how to get access to that information.

### **What is on file?**

Most of the information on file will have been given by you, but other information may have come from doctors or other people who may have had conversations with our staff or have written something in relation to your situation.

### **What can you see?**

You have the right to see personal information about you, but normally you cannot know what is recorded about anyone else - even other family members - without their consent. We also have a responsibility to the people who supplied information which they believed to be confidential (the most obvious example is your family doctor). We have to ask their permission to reveal the information they have given, and sometimes they may refuse because they feel it would not be in your best interests to read certain information. The decision to withhold information isn't one we take lightly and can only be made by a senior Adult and Community Services manager within the context of the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **Information about our computer records**

All social care departments need to hold essential personal information about people who use their services. This enables them to respond appropriately when people return for further help or advice, to supervise and manage staff, to provide anonymous



statistical and budgetary information and to plan new services. Adult and Community Services is registered to keep such records on its computers under the Data Protection Act 1998.

If a member of staff employed by Adult and Community Services provides you with a service, they will record some basic details about you on our computer database. This applies even if our member of staff is based with another agency such as the Health Service.

### **What is recorded on the computer record?**

The information will include your name, address, marital status, ethnic origin, date of birth, and in some situations the details of carers and other members of your family. There will be a record of other professionals who are known to be providing a service to you, code numbers, which can be used by Adult and Community Services staff to identify the team, and the member of staff who has been allocated to work with you, also the dates when you were referred and when reviews are due.

### **Who can see the information about you?**

All information we retain on our computer database is treated with strict confidentiality and can only be accessed - even by our own staff - through a password security system. In practice, your details will only normally be shared within the team of people assisting you, and their managers. Exceptionally, it may be necessary to share information with professionals in other agencies in order to protect a child or vulnerable adult from harm, or when we are made aware of possible criminal activities which should be brought to the attention of the police. You can, of course, ask to see your own records.

### **Can you have a service without information being recorded?**

No, our policy is to keep a record of everyone who uses our services.

### **How do you get to see your personal file?**

Your records are held safely at your Dorset County Council local office. To see them, you should make your request **in writing** to The Director of Adult and Community Services c/o your local office (details can be found at the end of this factsheet). Your request will



then be passed to an appropriate member of staff who will make contact with you. We require a fee of £10 to be included with the request. If you cannot make a request in writing you can ask someone else to do so on your behalf. They will need to provide some reliable proof of your identity and we will need to confirm your agreement to their request. When you let us know that you want to see your files, we will reply to you within 10 working days to let you know whether we hold any personal information about you, or if for any exceptional reason, we have to refuse access to the files. We will explain the reason for any refusal to you.

If we do have information about you, the law says that we must make sure all your records are gathered together and the necessary permission received from all the contributors within 40 days of your request being received. There may be delays in finding information and this can be taken into account. We can then arrange a date and time for you to see your file. You may want an advocate (someone to act on your behalf) to be with you when you see your file, and you may choose to see them in our offices, in your own home, or at your advocate's address. Wherever you choose to see the file, you will be given time to study it quietly with a member of staff available to help interpret or explain the information. We can provide copies of some information for you.

### **If you disagree with what is recorded**

If you feel any of the factual information is inaccurate you can explain to us why you feel the information is wrong or misleading and what could be done to put it right. You might feel the information should be corrected or erased, or you might want to supply a statement of the correct information. We may not agree that the information in the file is wrong. In this case no changes will be made, but a note of your views will be included on the file. You will be able to have further access to the file free of charge to see what changes or additions have been made.

### **What if I am still not happy?**

If you're unhappy that you have been refused access to your personal information, or dissatisfied with the way we have dealt with any changes you've asked to be made, you should contact



our complaints officer who will arrange for your complaint to be investigated.

### **Compliments and complaints**

Adult and Community Services staff in Dorset are committed to providing quality services to our service users, their carers and families. We welcome comments from our service users as this helps us to understand what aspects of our service people like.

If you are unhappy about the service you have received and want to make a complaint, our factsheet 'How to complain' describes the procedure. Our Complaints Officer can give you advice on the process and can be contacted on 01305 224322.

### **Diversity statement**

Diversity is not about treating everyone in the same way, but about recognising and valuing difference, as well as recognising and addressing inequalities and disadvantage.

As an employer and service provider, Dorset County Council seeks to promote an environment that accepts and actively supports diversity in age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability, culture, work style and the many other ways in which people differ from each other.

All our factsheets are available in large print and on audio cassette/CD, Braille, Easy to Read or alternative languages. Please contact the Information Office on 01305 224320.

Further information on services provided by Dorset County Council Adult and Community Services can be accessed at [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com)



## **Social care local offices:**

### **Bridport**

St Andrews Road, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3BJ

Tel: 01308 422234

Fax: 01308 426044

Email: [bridportsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:bridportsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

### **Christchurch**

Loring Road (off Jumpers Road), Christchurch, Dorset BH23 2GZ

Tel: 01202 474106

Fax: 01202 478081

Email: [christchurchsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:christchurchsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

### **Dorchester**

Acland Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1SH

Tel: 01305 251414

Fax: 01305 251034

Email: [dorchestersocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:dorchestersocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

### **Ferndown**

Penny's Walk, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9JY

Tel: 01202 877445

Fax: 01202 876604

Email: [ferndownsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:ferndownsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

### **North Dorset**

Bath Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1DR

Tel: 01258 472652

Fax: 01258 473161

Email: [northdorsetsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:northdorsetsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)



**Purbeck**

19 Bonnets Lane, Wareham, Dorset BH20 4HB

Tel: 01929 553456

Fax: 01929 556319

Email: [purbecksocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:purbecksocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

**Sherborne**

Non-visiting office

Tel: 01935 814104

Fax: 01935 817207

Email: [sherbornesocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:sherbornesocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

**Weymouth & Portland**

Jubilee Retail Park, Jubilee Close, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 7BG

Tel: 01305 760139

Fax: 01305 774622

Email: [weymouthsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:weymouthsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

