

Confidentiality

Details

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The core purpose of the SWVG is to visit, support and befriend Refugees and Asylum Seekers primarily in Southampton but also occasionally in detention centers / prisons

- It is important that Group members recognise that all information given to them by a solicitor, by a client or about a client must be treated as confidential.
- Visitors should obtain the consent of a client before contacting his solicitor.
- A client's case should not be discussed with other clients. It is, however, accepted that a visitor may need to share information given to them with another visitor in order to obtain better advice on how to proceed or in order to relieve some of the emotional stress of visiting. e.g. back up or other group member
- If use is made of an interpreter, she/he should be given a copy of our policy and agree to abide by it.
- Information given by a client or by anyone else about a client should not be given to anyone outside the Group without the informed consent of the client. Visitors should be especially careful in any contacts with journalists, radio or television presenters or campaign organisations not to give the name or any details, which allow individuals to be traced. If there is a need to give such information, the full implications must be explained to the client before asking his permission. In some cases the solicitor should also be consulted. If a client requests it, or gives specific permission, it is reasonable to approach an MP or person in a public responsibility post in order to enlist help. Clients who request press coverage should be referred to AVID or The Refugee Council, whose aims include publicity.
- When members of the Group speak to meetings about the asylum seekers and wish to use real life examples, they must ensure no mention is made of names or country of origin, to ensure no identification can be made.
- Essential information about clients will be maintained by the coordinator, administrator and visitor (referral form) and supporting documents (with the consent of the client) and will be removed as soon as its purpose has been fulfilled.
- Visitors must obtain the consent of the client before information is recorded by the visitor e.g. "It helps if we could maintain a brief summary of my visits is this ok?"
- Notes kept by individual visitors about clients should be kept confidentially and disposed of by burning or shredding when their purpose has been fulfilled.

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group *Working with asylum seekers and refugees*

Patrons: Miriam Margolyes OBE, John Pilkington, Dr Shirley Firth **Registered charity:** 1103093

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Specifically For Visitors to Detention Centres / Prisons

- A detainee's case would not normally be discussed with officials of the detention center or other detainees or former detainees
- On rare occasions it may be necessary to give information to detention centre officers in order to protect the safety of the detainee or others detained with them. This particularly applies when a visitor becomes aware of the possibility of a detainee attempting to commit suicide. On such occasions, the visitor should also inform one of the co-coordinators of the Group.

This confidentiality policy continues to apply after regular visiting with a client has ceased. It applies to those on bail, those who have been granted Refugee Status, ILR or ELR, those who have been deported and those with whom contact has simply been lost.

March 2009

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