

Mahamudra Centre for Universal Unity CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Mahamudra Centre for Universal Unity (MCUU) is committed to maintaining high standards in the area of confidentiality. We respect the right to privacy and confidentiality of those who have contact with MCUU. This policy gives guidance for ensuring confidentiality and outlines the circumstances where disclosures may be necessary.

Confidential information includes all personal, sensitive, and identifying information about people. Information about an individual should not be shared without the consent of the individual concerned.

MCUU exercises care towards those who are part of our community. This may involve talking with people about their lives and the lives of their friends and families. In the normal course of a 'pastoral' conversation, confidential information will be shared. The general rule is that all such information should be kept between the person seeking support and the person offering care. Permission should be sought before any information is passed on.

This includes information disclosed in small group discussions, and forums – this should not be discussed outside the group.

There are, however, circumstances where personal information may be passed on to the appropriate person such as the Designated Protection Person or to external agencies or authorities:

1. Protecting from Abuse

If a concern regarding abuse is expressed to a member of staff who is not an MCUU Designated Protection Person (DPP), that staff member will share that concern with an MCUU DPP, in order to enable the DPP to take it forward, as described in our Protecting from Abuse policy.

Our objective is always to conduct a thoughtful and thorough investigation into any alleged wrongdoing, with remedial action where appropriate as described in our Protecting from Abuse and Ethical policies.

Once a concern regarding abuse is raised or an allegation is made, both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator are entitled to have confidentiality until they are able and willing to have the information in the public realm. We acknowledge that it may take some time to work with both parties until each is able to recognize the importance of being open.

These are the circumstances when information must be disclosed, even if the alleged victim or perpetrator are not ready to consent to disclosure.

Circumstances When Information Must be Disclosed:

a) MCUU staff or board members may need to share sensitive information in order to take practical steps to protect the person at risk and the community:

- If the individual is under 18 and they disclose information that may indicate risk to themselves or other children or young people;
- If an adult discloses past child abuse and it is possible that children or young people are currently at risk from the abuser;
- If they believe that the individual/s involved is imminently intent on an act of self-harm or of significant harm to another person;

- If they believe that the person has committed an act of harm or abuse to him/herself or to another person either recently or at some time in the past;
- Where there is any other safeguarding issue to be dealt with in line with our protecting from abuse policy;
- If the participant gives information that indicates that a crime has been committed;
- Where a person is receiving medical care from others (including for mental health issues) or is receiving counselling from another organisation, there may be some sharing of information where it is deemed appropriate and beneficial to the person involved. The person will be informed of any such sharing of information.
- The individual/s gives information that indicates a possible terrorist threat.

b) Statutory and Legal Responsibilities:

MCUU staff and volunteers will abide by the statutory and legal requirements of New Zealand. If there is a statutory or legal requirement to inform the local authority and other relevant agencies to ensure protection from significant harm or abuse, information will be provided as required.

If Information needs to be Disclosed:

- If a decision has to be taken to break confidentiality, it will be done only after consultation with a Designated Protection Person.
- The person/s involved will be informed that the disclosure they are making may not be kept confidential.
- Any such disclosure will be shared internally or with external agencies as required while respecting the person's privacy as much as possible.
- Such sharing will only include those who need to know and the information necessary to ensure that the person is protected from harm and abuse and that proper processes are followed if they have been harmed.

Anonymised sharing of information:

If MCUU believe that information regarding a complaint or concern must be shared within the MCUU community, in order to inform regarding lessons needing to be learnt, and to allow people to discuss in a way that fosters understanding and community healing, we will anonymise the people involved.

For MCUU trust board review: anonymised information on all safeguarding incidents will be provided to the trust board to enable the board to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. The board will manage and minimise the risk of further incidents happening as far as this is reasonably possible, by supporting any necessary changes to policies, procedures and work practices.