



## Data Protection Policy

### Key details

- Policy prepared by: Winston McKenzie.
- Approved by board/management on: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018.
- Policy became operational on: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018.
- Next review date: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

### 1. Introduction

Connect Fostering Services needs to gather and use certain information about individuals. Primarily this will be employees (full-time or freelance), foster carers, and looked after children.

This policy describes how this personal data must be collected, handled and stored to meet the company's data protection standards — and to comply with the law.

### 2. Why this policy exists

This data protection policy ensures Connect Fostering Services Ltd:

- Complies with data protection law and follow good practice
- Protects the rights of staff, customers and partners
- Is open about how it stores and processes individuals' data
- Protects itself from the risks of a data breach

### 3. Data protection law

The Data Protection Act 2018 describes how organisations (including Connect Fostering) must collect, handle and store personal information.

These rules apply regardless of whether data is stored electronically, on paper or on other materials.



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

To comply with the law, personal information must be collected and used fairly, stored safely and not disclosed unlawfully.

The Data Protection Act is underpinned by eight important principles. These say that personal data must:

1. Be processed fairly and lawfully
2. Be obtained only for specific, lawful purposes
3. Be adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. Be accurate and kept up to date
5. Not be held for any longer than necessary
6. Processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects
7. Be protected in appropriate ways
8. Not be transferred outside the European Economic Area (EEA), unless that country or territory also ensures an adequate level of protection.

## **4. Policy scope**

This policy applies to:

- The head office of Connect Fostering Services Ltd
- All staff and volunteers of Connect Fostering Services Ltd
- All contractors, suppliers and other people working on behalf of Connect Fostering Services Ltd.

It applies to all data that the company holds relating to identifiable individuals, even if that information technically falls outside of the Data Protection Act 2018. This can include:

- Names of individuals
- Postal addresses
- Email addresses
- Telephone numbers
- plus, any other information relating to individuals that enable Connect Fostering to conduct its business.

## **5. Data protection risks**

This policy helps to protect Connect Fostering Services from some data security risks, including:



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

- **Breaches of confidentiality.** For instance, information being given out inappropriately.
- **Reputational damage.** For instance, the company could suffer if hackers successfully gained access to sensitive data.

## 6. Responsibilities

Everyone who works for or with Connect Fostering Services has some responsibility for ensuring data is collected, stored and handled appropriately.

Each team that handles personal data must ensure that it is handled and processed in line with this policy and data protection principles.

However, these people have key areas of responsibility:

- The **Directors and Registered Manager** are ultimately responsible for ensuring that Connect Fostering Services meets its legal obligations, and for approving any contracts with any third parties that may handle the company's sensitive data.
- The **Service Manager**, is responsible for:
  - Keeping Directors updated about data protection responsibilities, risks and issues.
  - Reviewing all data protection procedures and related policies, in line with an agreed schedule.
  - Arranging data protection training and advice for the people covered by this policy.
  - Handling data protection questions from staff and anyone else covered by this policy.
  - Dealing with requests from individuals to see the data Connect Fostering holds about them (also called 'subject access requests').
- The **Office Manager** is responsible for:
  - Ensuring all systems, services and equipment used for storing data meet acceptable security standards.



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

- Performing regular checks and scans to ensure security hardware and software is functioning properly.
- Evaluating any third-party services, the company is considering using to store or process data. For instance, cloud computing services.

## 7. General staff guidelines

- The only people able to access data covered by this policy should be those who **need it for their work**.
- Data **should not be shared informally**. When access to confidential information is required, employees can request it from their line managers.
- Connect Fostering Services **will provide training** to all employees, including foster carers, to help them understand their responsibilities when handling data.
- Employees should keep all data secure, by taking sensible precautions and following the guidelines below.
- In particular, **strong passwords must be used**, and they should never be shared.
- Personal data **should not be disclosed** to unauthorised people, either within the company or externally.
- Data should be **regularly reviewed and updated** if it is found to be out of date. If no longer required, it should be deleted and disposed of.
- Employees **should request help** from their line manager or the data protection officer if they are unsure about any aspect of data protection.

## 8. Data storage

These rules describe how and where data should be safely stored. Questions about storing data safely can be directed to the Service Manager, Officer Manager, or one of the Directors.



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

When data is **stored on paper**, it should be kept in a secure place where unauthorised people cannot see it.

These guidelines also apply to data that is usually stored electronically but has been printed out for some reason:

- When not required, the paper or files should be kept **in a locked drawer or filing cabinet**.
- Employees should make sure paper and printouts are **not left where unauthorised people could see them**, like on a printer.
- **Data printouts should be shredded** and disposed of securely when no longer required.

When data is **stored electronically**, it must be protected from unauthorised access, accidental deletion and malicious hacking attempts:

- Data should be **protected by strong passwords** that are changed regularly and never shared between employees.
- If data is **stored on removable media** (like a CD or DVD), these should be kept locked away securely when not being used.
- Data should only be stored on **designated drives and servers** and should only be uploaded to an **approved cloud computing services**.
- Servers containing personal data should be **sited in a secure location**, away from general office space.
- Data should be **backed up frequently**. Those backups should be tested regularly, in line with the company's standard backup procedures.
- Data should **never be saved directly** to laptops or other mobile devices like tablets or smart phones.
- All servers and computers containing data should be protected by **approved security software and a firewall**.



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

## 9. Data use

Personal data is of no value to Connect Fostering Services unless the business can make use of it. However, it is when personal data is accessed and used that it can be at the greatest risk of loss, corruption or theft:

- When working with personal data, employees should ensure **the screens of their computers are always locked** when left unattended.
- Personal data **should not be shared informally**. In particular, it should never be sent by email, as this form of communication is not secure.
- Data must be **encrypted before being transferred electronically**. The IT manager can explain how to send data to authorised external contacts.
- Personal data should **never be transferred outside of the European Economic Area**.
- Employees **should not save copies of personal data to their own computers**. Always access and update the central copy of any data.

## 10. Data accuracy

The law requires Connect Fostering Services to take reasonable steps to ensure data is kept accurate and up to date.

The more important it is that the personal data is accurate, the greater the effort Connect Fostering Services should put into ensuring its accuracy.

It is the responsibility of all employees who work with data to take reasonable steps to ensure it is kept as accurate and up to date as possible.

- Data will be held in **as few places as necessary**. Staff should not create any unnecessary additional data sets.
- Staff should **take every opportunity to ensure data is updated**. For instance, by confirming a customer's details when they call.



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

- Connect Fostering Services will make it **easy for data subjects to update the information** Connect Fostering Services holds about them. For instance, via the company website.
- Data should be **updated as inaccuracies are discovered**. For instance, if a customer can no longer be reached on their stored telephone number, it should be removed from the database.
- It is the marketing manager's responsibility to ensure **marketing databases are checked against industry suppression files** every six months.

## 11. Access to records requests

All individuals who are the subject of personal data held by Connect Fostering Services are entitled to:

- Ask **what information** the company holds about them and why.
- Ask **how to gain access** to it.
- Be informed **how to keep it up to date**.
- Be informed how the company is **meeting its data protection obligations**.

If an individual contacts the company requesting this information, this is called a subject access request (please see the *Access to Records* policy).

Subject access requests from individuals should be made by email, addressed to the data controller at [email address]. The data controller can supply a standard request form, although individuals do not have to use this.

Access to information will be provided free of charge unless hard copies of stored information is required and hence may attract an administrative charge to cover costs. Connect Fostering will aim to provide the relevant data within 30 days.

The data controller will always verify the identity of anyone making a subject access request before handing over any information.



# Connect Fostering Services Ltd

## **12. Disclosing data for any other reasons**

In certain circumstances, the Data Protection Act allows personal data to be disclosed to law enforcement agencies without the consent of the data subject.

Under these circumstances, Connect Fostering Services will disclose requested data. However, the data controller will ensure the request is legitimate, seeking assistance from the board and from the company's legal advisers where necessary.

## **13. Providing information**

Connect Fostering Services aims to ensure that individuals are aware that their data is being processed, and that they understand:

- How the data is being used
- How to exercise their rights

To these ends, the company has a privacy statement, setting out how data relating to individuals is used by the company.