



Centre for Wellbeing (CWB) Access to Case Notes Policy

Case-notes: requests from students, staff or others for access to case-notes.

Any student or staff member, or ex-student or staff member, requesting copies of their notes must channel the request through the University's **Information and Compliance Unit (ICU)** dataprotection@surrey.ac.uk using the relevant forms. There may be a small administrative fee for this service.

Access to counsellor/advisor case notes.

Counselling and Wellbeing case notes are highly confidential, and contain sensitive personal information. Notes can be a reminder of distressing events or feelings. For this reason, we recommend that, if at all possible, clients read their notes in the first instance in the presence of a counsellor/advisor, so that the client can talk through any thoughts or feelings engendered by their notes and explore any implications of releasing them to third parties.

If the client is intending to release the notes to a third party (e.g. solicitor, police officer etc) it's important that they read through them carefully first so they are fully aware of their contents. Only on this basis can they give informed consent for their release.

Clients or ex clients of CWB should be have the opportunity to think through the implications of notes being released *before* they are asked to sign any letter or other document giving permission to release notes.

We appreciate that meeting with a counsellor or advisor to read through the notes is not always practicable, but would always be available to support any client who had queries about their notes.

For students or staff still at the university:

Normal procedure is for the client to approach the University's **Information Compliance Unit** with a request to have access to their case notes. The student or staff member is advised to meet with their counsellor, or the Senior Counsellor or Senior Advisor, so that the implications of case notes being released can be clearly explained, and in order for the client to make sure that s/he is happy with what has been written in case notes being released.

Redaction of information about third parties

In compliance with GDPR, we will redact identifiable references to third parties before releasing the notes.

For students or staff who have left the university, or who are away from the area:

In order for the principle of informed consent to apply, we need to ensure that we provide students or staff who are not able to physically attend the service with the opportunity to review case notes before they agree for them to be seen by third parties. For this reason we will not release them to third parties direct, unless compelled to do so by a court of law.

How notes will be supplied

Notes are automatically generated from our secure online data management system (CORENet) in PDF format. A list of sessions is supplied separately from case notes relating to each individual session, to ensure proof of completeness.



Paper copies may be:

- Collected in person from the Centre for Wellbeing and proof of ID (passport, student card) will be needed.
- Sent to a verified address (proof required)
- Digital copies can be supplied through the University's secure digital 'Surrey Drop-Off' site

Electronically:

- Notes can be sent electronically via SurreyDrop.
- We are unable to release notes on USB sticks.

Request for notes from third parties

We will not normally release notes direct to third parties (e.g. police, solicitors etc) even with signed consent of the client, but will instead provide copies of notes to clients for them to distribute as appropriate. Requests from such parties should be directed to the data protection officer at the **Information Compliance Unit** in the first instance.

The only exception to this would be if the notes were to be subpoenaed by a court of law.

Any queries about the release of confidential case-notes can be addressed to the Head of Wellbeing and Welfare, or the University Information Compliance Unit.

Access to Data forms and Data Protection information for the University can be found at <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/information-management/data-protection>

Completed forms should be sent to the following address:

Information Compliance Unit
George Edwards Building
University of Surrey
Guildford
Surrey
GU2 7XH

Requests for copies of notes or case material which has previously been issued to the client or ex client

If a client or ex client of CWB is requesting a copy of material which has been previously issued to them through the procedure outlined above, the client or ex client can be issued the copy directly by CWB, without the client or ex client having to apply to the ICU.

In this case, proof of identity must be supplied with the request. Copies can be sent to the requester by the same methods as first issue notes, as outlined above.

See Also: Health and Wellbeing Services and your personal information document
CWB Confidentiality Policy document