

Confidentiality Policy

Organisation: Barking Buds Ltd

Effective Date: October 2025

Review Date: October 2026

Approved By: Bethany Kent (Director)

1. Policy Statement

Barking Buds Ltd is committed to maintaining the highest standards of confidentiality and data protection. This policy outlines how we handle confidential information about clients, staff, volunteers, and partners to ensure it is managed appropriately, legally, and respectfully at all times.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect the privacy and dignity of individuals associated with Barking Buds Ltd
- Comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 – Please see GDPR Document
- Ensure that sensitive information is accessed, used, stored, and shared in a responsible and lawful manner
- Promote a culture of trust, transparency, and professionalism within our organisation

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff (full-time, part-time, temporary)
- Volunteers and interns
- Contractors and consultants
- Trustees and board members
- Any third parties working on behalf of Barking Buds Ltd

It covers all confidential information, including but not limited to:

- Client personal data (e.g. name, contact information, medical or disability details)
- Staff records (e.g. HR files, performance reviews)
- Financial and operational data
- Commercial information (e.g. suppliers, partners, training materials)

- Assistance dog training notes and behavioural records
- Any other information marked as confidential or reasonably understood to be so

4. Responsibilities

All individuals covered by this policy are responsible for:

- Ensuring confidential information is kept secure at all times
- Accessing only the information they are authorised to view
- Refraining from discussing confidential matters in public or informal settings
- Reporting any suspected data breach or unauthorised disclosure immediately

Managers and directors have additional responsibility to ensure this policy is implemented and followed across their teams.

5. Information Sharing

Confidential information will **only be shared**:

- With the explicit, informed consent of the individual concerned
- When required by law (e.g. safeguarding concerns, court order)
- With authorised professionals working directly with the client, on a need-to-know basis
- With approved third-party services under strict confidentiality agreements

Where possible, Barking Buds Ltd will explain the reason for any necessary disclosure and seek consent in advance.

6. Storage and Access

Confidential information will be:

- Stored securely (e.g. password-protected systems, locked filing cabinets)
- Retained only for as long as necessary and in line with our Data Retention Policy
- Accessed strictly on a need-to-know basis
- Disposed of securely (e.g. shredding paper records, securely deleting digital files)

7. Breaches of Confidentiality

Any breach of confidentiality will be taken seriously and may result in:

- Disciplinary action (for staff or volunteers)

- Termination of contract (for external partners or contractors)
- Legal action where appropriate
- Removal from programmes or communities (Clients)

All breaches must be reported immediately to the designated Data Protection Officer or company director.

8. Client Confidentiality in Practice

When working with clients, Barking Buds Ltd will:

- Always seek informed consent before sharing personal or sensitive data
- Explain how client data will be used, stored, and protected
- Allow clients to request access to, correct, or delete their data in accordance with GDPR
- Keep all client assessments, training plans, and medical details confidential unless otherwise agreed

9. Confidentiality Agreement

All staff, volunteers, and contractors are required to sign a **Confidentiality Agreement** as part of their induction. This confirms their understanding of, and commitment to, upholding this policy.

10. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required due to:

- Legislative or regulatory changes
- Significant organisational changes
- Identified risks or incidents


All staff and relevant parties will be notified of any updates and may be required to re-sign the Confidentiality Agreement accordingly.

Contact

For questions about this policy or to report a breach, contact:

Confidentiality Officer / Data Protection Lead

 beth@barkingbuds.co.uk

 07842516667

