



11 Belgrave Road, London, SW1V 1RB
0333 323 3885 supportgroups@bipolaruk.org

Data Protection and GDPR – what does it mean for support groups?

You've probably been getting a lot of emails from different organisations recently, asking if you want to unsubscribe from their emails. This is because of the new General Data Protection Regulation (more snappily known as GDPR), a law which comes into force on 25th May 2018. Every organisation in every sector that processes personal data will have to be compliant with GDPR.

All charities have a fundamental legal responsibility to ensure that they take people's rights seriously and treat their personal data fairly and lawfully. Personal data includes not only a person's contact details but also information about many other things such as their health (which is particularly important for Bipolar UK in view of the work we do), racial or ethnic origin, gender, political opinions, religion and even trade union membership.

GDPR is an update rather than something completely new, so it's not a cause for anxiety, but we do need to be sure that support groups are following best practice requirements. We will be updating the data protection section in the Group Support Manual but below are the things that you need to do as facilitators.

Holding Personal Data of Group Members

We provide paper contact slips for group members to provide their contact details and to opt-in to group & charity emails. Revised versions of these are available on our website at www.bipolaruk.org/groupmatters or by contacting the Support Groups team on supportgroups@bipolaruk.org / 0333 323 3885.

As long as people are ticking "Yes" on the contact forms, then it's OK to email them, and any contact details already in the support group's account will be there because people said 'yes' in the past.

When someone completes a contact slip, you can add their name and email address to the contacts list in the Support Group email account. Then send the paper slips in to Bipolar UK and your job is done.

As long as the only place that you're holding group member's details is on the Support Group email system, that's all you need to be concerned about.

But if you have personal data held anywhere else (mobiles, paper lists, personal email accounts) you need to get rid of that so that we're not in breach of the law. The exception is group volunteers who consent to share their contact details with each

other for the purposes of running meetings (e.g. a text to say they're running late). As always please treat one another's details with respect and keep them securely.

Health Data

The special protections the GDPR gives to health data means that:

- a) we are asking all co-facilitators to give express consent to our recording whether they have bipolar or are otherwise affected;
- b) we are changing our group signing in sheets to seek express consent to our keeping those sheets and recording statistics on the number of people attending our groups who have bipolar or are caring for someone with bipolar
- c) you should never make a record someone's bipolar diagnosis or other health conditions as part of your Bipolar UK activities.

Opting Out of Support Group Emails

You can add this template text to your group's email signature, to let people know they can ask to be unsubscribed/removed from the email list at any time.

“If you no longer want to receive emails from the XXXXX Support Group, please reply to this email and put UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line. Thank you.”

If you need help with setting up your email signature, please let us know. If someone does ask to be removed from the email list, as well as deleting their details from the main list of contacts, you also have to remove them from any “one click” mailing list you've set up. We're happy to help if you're not sure what to do.

Replying to Questions

If anyone asks you about Bipolar UK's data protection or privacy policies then, as well as describing what you do at the group level, you can refer them to our full privacy policy. It can be found at www.bipolaruk.org/privacy-policy and has been updated in accordance with the GDPR. If you have any questions which are not covered there please let us know by emailing data@bipolaruk.org.

If someone wants to know what information Bipolar UK holds about him or her there are time limits within which we need to respond so please pass their request on to us as soon as you can. The quickest way to do so is for you (or the person enquiring) to e-mail us at data@bipolaruk.org

Using Group Email Systems & Sending Reports

Following on from the data protection law changes, it's important that only your group email accounts are used to communicate with group members.

The online Outlook email system is quite easy to use once you've had a go. If you don't feel confident about sending a blind-copied email to all your group members, get in touch. We can re-send you the instructions for using your account and sending emails, and if you're stuck we can talk you through sending an email.

You can email scans or photos of your signing-in sheets and meeting reports, which we will save centrally.

But if you prefer to post paper copies to the office, that's fine. We have pre-paid envelopes for the London Office – let us know if you need some and we can send them out to you.

With fewer staff, changes in data protection, and the need to fundraise, it's more important than ever that we're communicating and have up to date group information. If we can help you with emails or reports, please ask – our job is to support you so that you can support everyone who comes to our groups.

Updated: June 2018