

Here are some points that you need to consider. You should have included these in your reflective activity.

- Telling Shona you will ask the team not to discuss her business is not the right thing to do now. While it is important to speak to the team and ask them not to question Shona, you need to take responsibility for your role in what has happened, apologise and take more steps to support Shona now.
- You know from your first conversation with Shona that she did not want her colleagues to know why she has been taking time off and it is your role to support her. You must make sure that her confidentiality is protected from now on.
- As a social service manager you must know and use your organisation's policies on confidentiality. This policy includes protecting the confidentiality of workers as well as people using your services.
- You made a mistake when you told the team to contact Shona with any questions about why she was off. This led to staff being curious and asking inappropriate questions. When you did this you were not meeting the standards expected of a social service manager.
- An important part of supporting and retaining staff is to effectively plan for absences. Retaining staff and planning cover is important for the maintenance and development of your service and for the continuity of care for people.
- Being questioned by colleagues about the reasons for her absence has put Shona's wellbeing at risk and likely caused her stress. Stress can have a broader impact on organisational performance and retention.
- Clear and open communication is essential to effective teamwork. You need to know when it is appropriate to share information and with who. Telling staff members to question colleagues about their absence sends a message that this is acceptable. Your colleagues might also suspect that you are not trustworthy.
- You need to appreciate that you are a role model for your colleagues. You must demonstrate you are trustworthy through your actions. By observing good practice, others will learn the right way to handle confidential information.
- You need to revisit your organisation's policies on confidentiality and managing absence so that in future you make the right choice when a member of staff has a similar situation.

When Shona first spoke to you about her situation, the right thing to do would have been to make arrangements to provide cover and support for Shona and tell her you would need to let your line manager know.