

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

- Apologising to Shona for what has happened is the right thing to do now. While it was important to tell your own manager, you should have told Shona when you first spoke that this is something you would need to do. It was perhaps not necessary to tell everyone at the managers' meeting about Shona's situation. You should have arranged to talk in confidence to the specific manager(s) who needed to know and stressed the information should remain confidential.
- You know from your first conversation with Shona that she did not want colleagues to know why she has been taking time off and it is your role to support and reassure 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 managers' meeting about Shona without first letting her know you would need to do this. This has upset Shona because information about her has been shared without her knowledge. When you did this you were not meeting the standards expected of a social service manager.
- While you made a mistake in the way you dealt with the information about Shona, you were right to make plans for cover. 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 approached by another manager about her absence could put Shona's wellbeing at risk and cause 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. If staff members know their personal details may be discussed without their knowledge it 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.