

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

- Having a quiet word with the staff involved is not the right thing to do. In doing this you are not meeting the standards expected of a social service manager.
- The best thing to do now would be to speak to your manager and tell them there has been a breach of confidentiality from within the management team. You should also speak to Shona to reassure her.
- While it was important to tell your own manager, you should have told Shona when you first spoke 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 that 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.
- You need to be more open and accurate in the way you communicate. When you told Shona before that another manager was probably just making a general comment, this was a missed opportunity to be honest and put things right.
- 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.
- While you made a mistake in the way you handled 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.
- 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.