

THCAN Referral System

Policy and procedures for use

Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework of procedures for organisations and individual users who have access to the THCAN Referral System. By engendering a shared commitment to quality standards, we aim to create a system that all users can have confidence in. We are committed to a process of continual improvement, and to that end the system and these procedures will be reviewed and revised periodically.

THCAN commitments

- Providing training and support for organisational leads and in-house trainers.
- Resolving technical issues and problems in a timely fashion.
- Anonymising statistical information drawn from the THCAN Referral System.
- Monitoring usage and following up overdue referrals.

Data protection

Island Advice Centre (Lead Agency of Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network) is the Data Controller for the THCAN Referral System

- Each organisation using the THCAN Referral System is Data Processor for the Referral System
- Data is retained in line with data protection retention and destruction policies in accordance with UK law.
- Organisations using the referral system are required to retain, use and destroy data in accordance with UK law. All organisations must have their own data protection policy which will cover information sent or received through the THCAN Referral System.

Individual user responsibilities

Taking joint responsibility

The success of the system depends on individual users taking joint responsibility in the process of making, receiving and tracking referrals.

The logo for THCAN Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network. It features a purple arc above the text. 'THCAN' is in a large, purple, sans-serif font. 'Tower Hamlets' is in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. 'Community Advice Network' is in a purple, sans-serif font, matching the arc's color.

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On occasion, particularly in urgent cases, direct communication by phone may be necessary to supplement the email updates and notifications generated through the THCAN Referral System.

Online security and password guidance

The Referral System is set up with a high level of encryption to ensure client information is safely stored, and each username and password is unique. It is the responsibility of individual users to ensure that passwords are:

- kept securely and confidentially.
- not given to an unauthorised user to gain access to the system.

Passwords should be at least **8 characters long**, should contain numbers and a mixture of upper and lowercase letters, and should use other characters such as # * @ \$ etc.

Confidentiality and client consent

Confidentiality and consent are key in ensuring the integrity of the system. We ask users and organisations to abide by the following commitments:

- All organisations must have their own confidentiality policy which will cover information sent or received through the THCAN Referral System.
- Information received through the referral system should not be passed on to a third party unless the client has directly given you permission to do so.
- Referrals must only be made with the full knowledge and consent of the client.
- Clients must be made aware of where they can find the Referral System Privacy Notice:
- All organisations must retain, use and destroy client data in accordance with UK law.
- Inform THCAN if a client has requested the erasure of their information in accordance with UK law.

This consent (to pass on case details as part of the referral) should ideally be confirmed in writing, ordinarily as part of your own in-house consent form (if you have one). Where this is not practical or appropriate (e.g. with a telephone enquiry), verbal consent must be obtained.

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Some points to remember:

- By submitting a referral using the THCAN Referral System, the user is confirming that the client has given permission to the referral being made.
- A client consent form does not need to be sent to the organisation receiving the referral, but they will need their own authority to retain client data.
- The THCAN Referral System is only intended to record information and should not be used as a case management system.

Making Appropriate Referral

Users are asked to regularly check the THCAN Directory for organisations signed up to use the referral system, which can be found at: <http://thcan.org.uk/advice-centres/>

Receiving referrals and acting within agreed timescales

Users are committed to keeping to the agreed timescales:

- to acknowledge receipt of a referral via the referral system within three working days (including the date on which the referral was made).
- to close the referral via the Referral System within a further five working days and leave a comment as to the action that has led to the case being either taken forward (positive outcome) or not (negative outcome).

If it is not possible to keep to these timescales, for example if you are unable to make contact with the client, you should contact the referring organisation to discuss how to proceed and leave a note on the Referral System to confirm the agreed action.

Feedback and troubleshooting

The continual improvement of the THCAN Referral System depends on receiving timely feedback from users. As well as contacting us with technical problems, please let us know about any blocks you are experiencing in using the system and feel free to suggest improvements.

Organisational lead responsibilities

General

- To help ensure individual user responsibilities are met in your organisation/team.
- To liaise with THCAN in setting up training.
- To be a point of contact for resolving issues.
- To take organisational responsibility for the use and development of the THCAN Referral System internally.

Setting up administrative contacts and internal processes

Organisational leads are responsible for establishing and overseeing internal procedures for monitoring outgoing referrals and responding to incoming referrals. To this end, you will be asked to:

- Provide an email address to be used as the main administrative contact on the system and ensure this email is checked regularly.
- A procedure to determine who will acknowledge receipt of incoming referrals and who will close the referral (recording the outcome on the system and adding notes about action taken). This may or may not be the same person.
- A procedure for monitoring outgoing referrals.

Ideally, all advisors receiving and making referrals will be set up with an account, with the administrative contact person monitoring incoming referrals and forwarding them to the appropriate advisor to action.

Alternatively, you could set up the administrative contact to be responsible for making all the updates on the referral system with instructions from the advisor. Similarly, outgoing referrals can be monitored centrally through an administrator, or through the individual user making the referral.

Review Meetings

THCAN will organise meetings from time to time, to help identify and tackle any problems and blocks with using the system and to assist THCAN in the strategic development of the Referral System. The meetings are also an opportunity for networking and sharing best practice between agencies.

We ask that, where practical, organisational leads either attend these meetings or arrange for a representative to attend and that information and learning obtained is then cascaded to other users.

Updating the Directory

Organisational leads are responsible for informing THCAN of changes on the Directory (or nominating someone else to do so) with detailed information about current services provision.

Closing user accounts

Organisational leads are responsible for removing users from their account on the system if they leave or no longer need access. They should also inform THCAN.

Switching referral status on and off

As organisational lead person you can temporarily switch off the capacity to receive referrals through the system if you are unable to accept new referrals because of, for example, staff training or excessive workload. You need to remember to switch it on again when you want to resume availability for receiving referrals.