

Signposting policy

Contents

- 1 Policy Control
2. Introduction
3. Purpose
4. Scope
5. Definitions of the Policy
6. Key Principles
7. Signposting Disclaimer
8. Roles and Responsibilities
9. Collaboration with External Agencies
10. Review Control

1. Policy Control

This policy, is based on the Trussell template Signposting Policy V1.0 first published June 2025.

Version	Description	Date
1.1	Signposting Policy	20 th June 2025
This version issued		5 th September 2025
Board of Trustees approved this version		22 nd September 2025
For Review:		September 2027

1.1 Related policies

Data Privacy Policy
Data Protection Policy
Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement
Health and Safety Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Equal Opportunities Policy
Whistle Blowing Policy

2. Introduction

At Chesterfield Foodbank, we are committed to supporting individuals in crisis with compassion, dignity, and respect. Alongside emergency food and the provision of essential household supplies, we often provide information about local services that may help address wider needs such as housing, debt, mental health, or social support. This process, known as signposting, forms part of our holistic support model.

However, we recognise that some individuals may not want to share all information relating to their current personal or legal status. Because we do not have access to this information to protect the privacy and autonomy of all clients, we adopt a clear and consistent policy around signposting that sets out our responsibilities and the limits of our role. For example, people we

signpost may be subject to legal restrictions, such as civil injunctions or Public Spaces Protection Orders, that limit their ability to access certain services or locations. The person signposting the client may not be aware of any restriction and it is the responsibility of the client to apply any restriction placed on them.

This policy clarifies the distinction between signposting, referrals, and advice, and explains how we responsibly provide information without assuming legal oversight or creating risk for clients or staff.

3. Purpose

This policy outlines Chesterfield Foodbank's approach to signposting clients to external services. It aims to promote consistent and safe practice, define organisational boundaries, and clarify responsibility relating to information sharing when clients may be subject to legal restrictions (such as civil injunctions or Public Spaces Protection Orders).

4. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and resident Guest Agencies who may provide information to clients about external services during their engagement with the Foodbank.

5. Definitions and Distinctions

To ensure clarity and avoid role confusion, Chesterfield Foodbank makes the following distinctions between *Signposting*, *Referrals* and *Advice*:

- **Signposting**

What it is: Providing clients with publicly available information about external services that may be relevant to their needs. No client information is shared with the third-party organisation.

Examples: Displaying, making available, handing out:

- A signposting booklet which contains a collection of local organisations and their services
- A coupon or ticket for a free drink, free meal, free haircut etc
- Pamphlets with helplines and contact details
- Posters, flyers or leaflets for community groups, churches, warm spaces, cafes, coffee mornings or soup kitchens
- Publicly available online information

- **Referral**

What it is: A more formal process that involves actively connecting a client to a service. It usually requires consent and may include sharing personal information or helping arrange appointments.

Examples:

- Completing a referral form to a Food Pantry or Social Supermarket.
- Making a phone call on behalf of a client with their permission to make an appointment or request a service, for example money off vet bills.

- Liaising with a support worker to coordinate service access.

- **Advice**

What it is: Providing informed, specific guidance tailored to the client's individual situation. Chesterfield Foodbank offers signposting information and referral to other services; it does not provide legal, housing, debt or benefits advice.

Examples (not permitted unless appropriately trained and authorised):

- Interpreting legal documents or court orders.
- Advising someone on how to challenge a sanction or apply for asylum.
- Telling a client whether they are "allowed" to visit a specific area.

Note: Where a client needs formal advice, they should be *signposted or referred* to an appropriate organisation (e.g. Citizens Advice, Shelter, or their support worker).

Here are some examples to help you understand what we can and cannot do:-

ISSUE	DO WE OFFER THIS?
Signposting or referring someone to agencies that can help	Yes
Reading out post or documents to someone	Yes
Advising someone on the content of post or documents	No
Offering legal, housing' debt or benefit advice	No
Sharing personal experience that might be interpreted as advice	No
Interpreting document from one language to another	No
Offer opinion or guidance about any legal restrictions that the client might be subject to.	No

6. Key Principles

Client Autonomy and Responsibility: Clients are responsible for ensuring they are legally permitted to attend any external service or location. This includes applying the restrictions placed on them by injunctions, court orders, or other restrictions.

- **No Legal Screening:** Chesterfield Foodbank does not ask clients about legal restrictions and does not have access to such information. Attempting to assess restrictions may cause harm or breach privacy.

- Respectful Consistency: All clients receive the appropriate signposting support and the same disclaimers. This avoids intrusive questioning and ensures equity as well as equality.
- Sensitive Practice: If a client voluntarily discloses a restriction, staff and volunteers should take care not to direct them toward an inappropriate location. However, responsibility remains with the client.

7. Signposting Disclaimer

To protect both clients and the organisation, the following disclaimer should be included on all in-house produced written materials involving signposting (e.g. coupons, leaflets, handouts):

"Important: Please Read Before Attending External Services

Chesterfield Foodbank provides information about external services to help clients access additional support. This is for general information only and does not imply a formal referral or endorsement.

Clients are responsible for ensuring they are legally permitted to access any external service or location. This includes being aware of any civil injunctions, court orders, Public Spaces Protection Orders, or other legal restrictions.

Chesterfield Foodbank is not liable for any consequences arising from breach of legal restrictions.

Before attending any service, please check with your keyworker, probation officer, or support worker if you are unsure about any legal restrictions that may apply to you.

Staff and volunteers may also give a verbal reminder, such as:

"Please make sure you're allowed to go to that area before using this service."

8. Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff and Volunteers Must:

- Use approved signposting materials and wording.
- Avoid offering advice beyond their role or training.
- Respect client confidentiality and autonomy.
- Refrain from probing about legal status or restrictions.
- Seek supervision if unsure how to proceed after a disclosure.

Supervisors Should:

- Support staff with training on this policy.
- Review signposting practices to ensure consistency and compliance.

- Liaise with the Foodbank Project Manager or the Foodbank Trustees about any concerns around liability. Any Safeguarding concerns should be discussed with the Safeguarding Lead or the Safeguarding Lead Trustee.

9. Collaboration with External Agencies

Where appropriate and with the client's informed consent, Chesterfield Foodbank may liaise with external agencies (e.g. housing, adult social care, police, ambulance, probation, mental health services). No personal information should be shared without consent, unless required by safeguarding protocols.

10. Review Control

This policy will be reviewed biennially or when significant changes in technology or regulations occur.