

Welcome to Unit 2

Welcome to Unit 2 of this online component of Module 4: Access to Mental Health Services.

In this section, we will focus on ethical considerations when supporting the mental health needs of migrants and refugees.

You will learn about confidentiality, privacy, informed consent, data protection and the ethical role of lay advisors.

What are ethics in mental health?

Ethics are the principles that guide how we behave toward others.

In mental health, this means being respectful, trustworthy and careful with sensitive information.

For lay advisors, ethical practice ensures that the people you support are treated with dignity and fairness.

Why ethics matter – especially for migrants and refugees...

Migrants and refugees often face additional risks when seeking help...

...including fear of authorities, trauma and mistrust of formal services.

Respecting privacy, building trust and understanding cultural differences are all so important when working with newly-arrived migrants and refugees.

A small mistake can damage someone's willingness to seek help again.

Confidentiality – what it means...

Confidentiality means keeping private information private.

You should not share what someone tells you without their permission – unless they are at serious risk of harm; and even then, it must be handled carefully.

Always explain your role and what you can or cannot keep private.

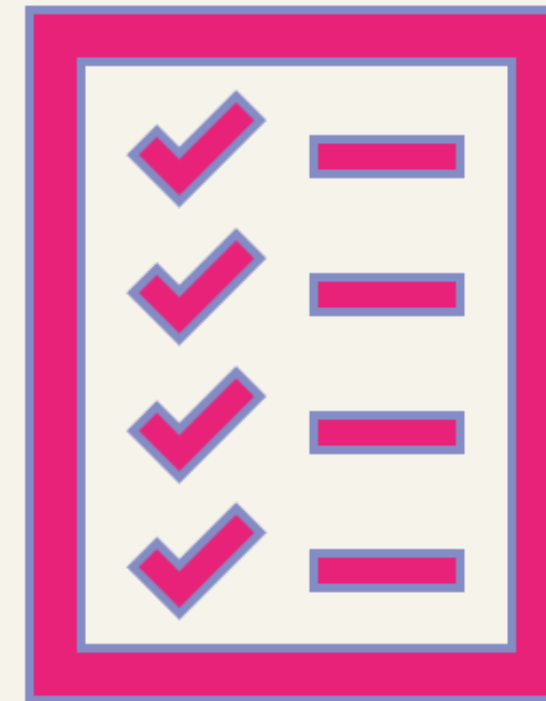
GDPR and Data Protection

- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies across the EU and protects personal data, including mental health information.
- As a lay advisor, you must not record or store sensitive data unless absolutely necessary and with consent. The consent must be in written form.
- If you refer someone to a service, do so with their full understanding and permission.
- Find out more about GDPR, by watching this short video: <https://youtu.be/I-VuonciKWk?feature=shared>

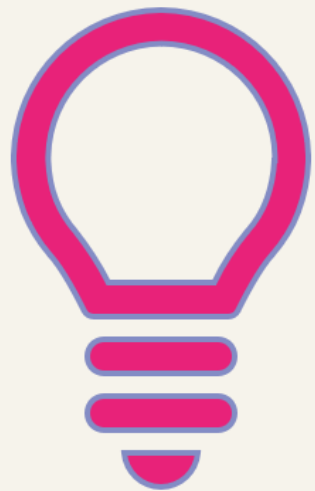


Informed consent

- Informed consent means someone agrees to care or support after being fully informed – in a language they understand.
- They must know what will happen, who will be involved and that they can say no.
- Consent must be voluntary, clear, and specific.



Case Scenario 3



Fatima is a 19-year-old Syrian woman, living in Belgium. You support her through a community group. She tells you about her nightmares and agrees to visit a mental health service.

She speaks little French. You arrange an interpreter. You explain who she will meet and what to expect. She consents to the appointment.

→ This is an example of ethical, informed support.

Ethical dilemmas

Sometimes situations are unclear.

For example:

- A young person confides in you but doesn't want help.
- Someone is experiencing distress, but their family disagrees with seeking care.
- A person asks you to keep something secret that suggests risk.

→ In these cases, talk to a trusted supervisor or advisor and never act alone.

Boundaries and your role...

Always remember...

- As a lay advisor, you are not a therapist.
- You offer empathy, information and guidance.
- Your role is to support – not to diagnose or treat.
- Setting boundaries protects you and the person you are helping.

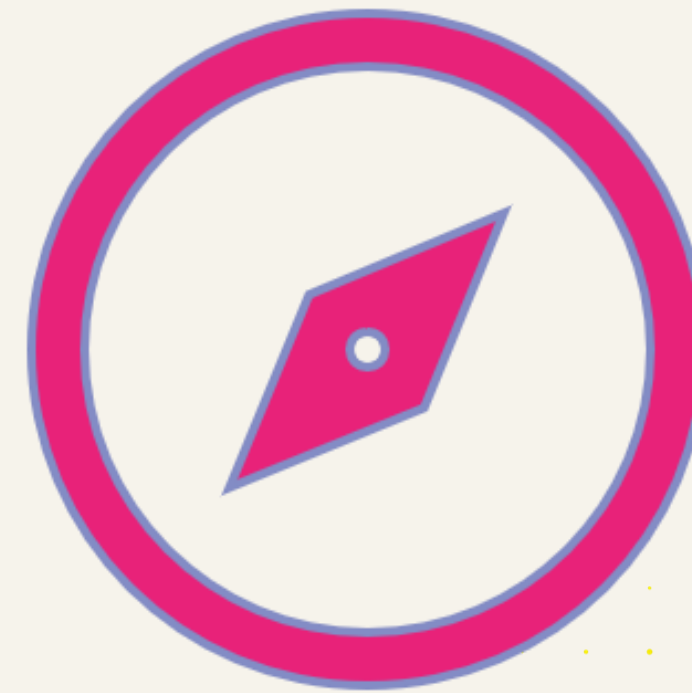


Respect and cultural sensitivity

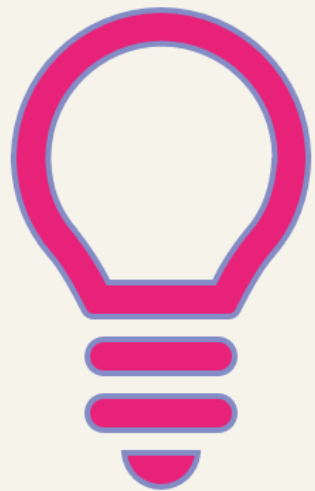
Respecting culture means listening without judgement.

Mental health beliefs differ – in some communities, emotional distress is described through physical symptoms or spiritual language.

Cultural sensitivity means adjusting your language and approach, not imposing your view.



Case Scenario 4



Khalid is a young refugee living in France. He says he is 'cursed' and feels haunted at night. You want to help. You don't dismiss his belief but ask what support he would feel comfortable with.

You find a culturally appropriate counsellor through a local NGO.

→ Respect and referral, not correction, is the ethical choice.

Summary of key points

- Ethics protect trust, safety and dignity.
- Confidentiality must be respected, unless serious risk exists.
- Always seek informed consent.
- Understand cultural views and communicate with sensitivity.
- Know your role and its limits.