

The Information Commissioner's office says it has been informed about the serious data protection breach involving a helpline charity in Derry.

Contact NI, which runs the Lifeline service, confirmed the identities of up to 20 people who contacted the service were clearly visible on some of the confidential documents that were found in the city centre at the weekend.

The papers were blown from the sixth floor of the Embassy building in Waterloo Place.

One of the documents, seen by the BBC, appears to identify callers by their first and second names, while others contain personal accounts of counselling conversations.

Contact NI, which runs Lifeline, said it was shocked by the incident.

Fergus Comiskey, clinical director has apologised and said each case will be followed up.

"We want to do everything we can to reduce any alarm that people may be experiencing as a result of this data loss on our part and take full responsibility for it.

"We want to re-assure the public that we have gathered up all of the data that was strewn around the streets.

"We're working very closely with Derry City Council waste management department who have assisted us in the gathering up", he said.

Norma Patterson from Contact NI said the vast majority of sheets were summary sheets with a

caller identify code on it.

"We want to re-assure people that there is minimal information on the papers," she said.

"There are no more than 20 people whose names were on the sheets.

The BBC has 35 pages in its possession after the organisation was alerted by a man walking with his children on Sunday. He saw the documents lying at Victoria Market car park in the city centre.

A BBC reporter found many more in adjacent streets.

Most of the documents do not feature people's names, though one does appear to disclose the names of eight callers.

Confidential information

Some of the telephone logs carry information about alleged sexual abuse, crime and addictions.

Contact NI said they take data confidentiality very seriously and were shocked.

The charity said the documents were stored in a bag in their Derry office and believe the bag fell over and the papers were blown out of a sixth floor fire exit.

Contact NI appealed for anyone who came across the documents to return them to their offices at the Embassy Building in the city.

