

Information Sharing Guidance for Professionals



TEA-BREAK GUIDE



Why is Information Sharing important to Safeguarding?

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. A key factor that keeps appearing in Serious Case Reviews and Audits undertaken in the county as well as nationally has been the failure by practitioners to record information, to share it, to understand its significance and then take appropriate action.

Why are the key things I need to consider when sharing information?

Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard children at risk of abuse or neglect. No practitioner should assume that someone else will pass on information which may keep a child safe. Practitioners should use their judgement when making decisions on what information to share and when. They should follow their organisation's procedures, any information sharing agreements in place with their organisation and their partners, and consult with their manager if in doubt. The most important consideration is whether sharing information is likely to safeguard and protect a child.

HM Government has released advice for practitioners regarding information sharing for safeguarding purposes. It identifies the principles of information sharing as:

Necessary and proportionate - consider how much information is needed to be released. Do not share more data than is necessary to be of use. It is a key element of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and consideration should be given to the impact of disclosing information about a person to any third parties. It must also be proportionate to the need and level of risk

Relevant - Only information that is relevant should be shared with those who need to know. This allows others to do their job effectively and make informed decisions

Adequate - Information should be adequate for its purpose if it is disclosed. Information should be of the right quality to ensure that it can be understood and relied upon

Accurate - Information should be accurate and up to date and should clearly distinguish between fact and opinion. If the information is historical then this should be explained

Timely - Information should be shared in a timely fashion to reduce the risk of missed opportunities to offer support and protection to a child. Timeliness is key in emergency situations and it may not be appropriate to seek consent for information sharing if it could cause delays and therefore place a child or young person at increased risk of harm. Practitioners should ensure that sufficient information is shared, as well as consider the urgency with which to share it

Secure - Information should be shared in an appropriate, secure way. Practitioners must always follow their organisation's policy on security for handling personal information

Record - Information sharing decisions should be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share. If the decision is to share, reasons should be cited including what information has been shared and with whom, in line with organisational procedures. If the decision is not to share, it is good practice to record the reasons for this decision and discuss them with the requester. Information should also be kept in line with the organisation's retention policy and not for longer than is necessary

Information must be shared appropriately - Be open and honest with the individual about why what when and with whom the information will be shared unless it is inappropriate to do so. Seek advice from other practitioners or speak to a Manager if you are in any doubt about disclosing the information.

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and Human Rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing but provide a framework to ensure information is shared appropriately. Where possible, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so, information should be shared with consent; however, information can be shared without consent if in your judgement there is a lawful basis to do so, such as there is a safeguarding issue.