Bitesize Briefing: Information Sharing

GATESHEAD safeguarding children partnership



1 Why Do We Share Information?

Sharing information helps us to recognise and prevent abuse and neglect, and to work together effectively to reduce the risk of further harm. It is important to share...

- ☑ **The right information.**
- ☑ **At the right time.**
- ☑ **With the right people.**

Did You Know?

Safeguarding Children Reviews consistently highlight that missed opportunities to record, understand the significance of, and share information can have serious consequences for the safety and welfare of children.

2 The Principles of Information Sharing

- Information must be **accurate**.
- Information must be **adequate**.
- Information must be **relevant**.
- Information must be **timely**.
- Information must be **shared securely**.



- Decisions to/not to share must be **recorded**.
- Decisions to/not to share must be **defensible**.
- Consent should be sought where **appropriate***.
- Information should be shared **proactively**.
- Information sharing must be **proportionate**.

3 Information Sharing & the Law

If the GSCP requests case information, this **must** be provided, unless there is a lawful exemption. Practitioners **do not** need consent from the child or family, as this is a statutory requirement. Requests for information **must meet the principles of necessity and proportionality**.

Article 8 of the Human Rights Act (the right to respect for private and family life) can be overriden where it is necessary to protect children from harm.



Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) emphasises the importance of early information-sharing to identify risk and protect children. This statutory guidance document highlights that organisations are **required** to have clear arrangements for multi-agency and internal information sharing.

UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act (2018) do not prevent information sharing. They provide frameworks for sharing in ways that are safe, legal and appropriate. ***"Safeguarding children and individuals at risk"*** is a specific legal condition which allows for sharing information without consent.

The 2004 amendment to the Children Act strengthens information-sharing obligations. Individuals and organisations are **required** to provide information if it is required to support the Local Authority, Police and ICB to carry out their safeguarding functions.

Whilst **the Care Act (2014)** focuses on adults, the Act is clear that consent to share information can be overriden if there is risk of harm to children.

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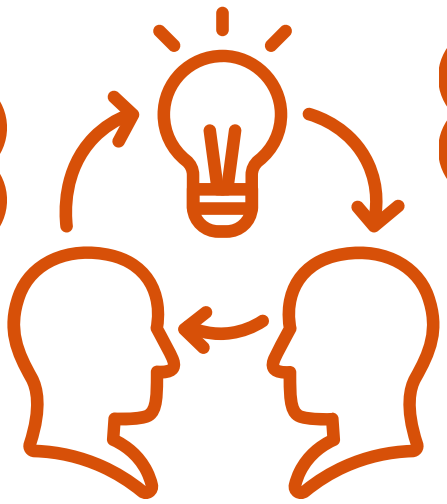
CLICK HERE!

Read our Joint Information-Sharing Protocol in full.

4 What Does Information Sharing Look Like?

Disclosure
Acknowledging possession of relevant information and making it accessible while retaining ownership.

Exchange
Transferring information and data from one agency to another, transferring responsibility for it.



Pooling
Combining information into shared records.

Reporting
Sharing anonymised or aggregate information and data.

5 Consent & Information Sharing*

Consent to share information should be sought where appropriate. However, consent is not needed if...

Seeking it would cause unjustified delay.
Consent to share information should not be sought if doing so would lead to an unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm to a child.

A child is experiencing - or is at risk of experiencing - significant harm.
Consent to share information should not be sought if there is evidence (or reasonable cause to believe) that a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm. Consent should also be overriden if seeking consent would place the child at further risk.

NSPCC Learning

Why is it important to work with other agencies and share information?

Seeking it would prejudice the prevention of serious crime.
Consent to share information should not be sought if doing so would prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime. E.g.: Child Sexual Exploitation, County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation, Human Trafficking, Honour-Based Abuse or serious Physical Abuse.

Key Messages for Practitioners

1. Never assume that someone else will share vital information. You must always share information when there are concerns about risk.
2. Effective safeguarding arrangements rely on collaborative working and good information sharing across all agencies.
3. If you are unsure about sharing information, speak to your Line Manager/Designated Safeguarding Lead or consult your organisation's policies.

