



One Minute Guide



Why is information sharing important to safeguarding?

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults. A key factor identified in many Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPR's) and Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) has been a failure by practitioners to record information, to share it, to understand its significance and then take appropriate action.

What 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 or adults at risk of abuse or neglect. Practitioner should not assume that someone else will pass on information which may keep a child, young person or adult safe.

Practitioners should use their professional judgement when making decisions on what information to share and when. They should follow their organisation's procedures and seek advice, if in doubt. **The most important consideration is whether sharing information is likely to safeguard and protect a child, young person or adult at risk.**

For adults at risk you should consider:

- Has the person consented to the sharing of information?
- Is it in the adult's vital interests to prevent serious harm or distress or life threatening situations?
- Is it in the public interest e.g. there is also a risk to others?
- Whether the adult has care and support needs
- Is the adult at risk subject to coercion or undue influence, to extent that they are unable to give consent?
- Does the adult lack the mental capacity to consent to a referral to Health and Adult Services and it is in the adult's best interests

HM Government has released advice for Practitioners regarding information sharing for the purpose of safeguarding children. Although intended for safeguarding children and young people, the principles of the guidance also apply to safeguarding adults. It identifies the principles of information sharing as:

- **Necessary and proportionate** - consider how much information is needed to be released. Don't share more data than is necessary to be of use 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 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 or adult. 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 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 organisations 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 or legal team if you are in any doubt about disclosing the information.

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018), the Data Protection Act (2018) and Human Rights Act (1998), 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. Information can be shared without consent, if in your

professional judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, as outlined above.

When and how to share information

