

7 Minute Briefing: Safeguarding Children and Information Sharing

Why Information Sharing Matters:

Effective safeguarding relies on timely and proportionate information sharing.

Information-sharing guidance emphasises that failure to share information can place a child at increased risk of harm.

It highlights **that data protection laws are not barriers to safeguarding children.**

All children (0-18 years old) have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect, and this right **takes priority over privacy rights** when practitioners believe that withholding information may increase the risk of harm.

Helpful Documents/ Further Reading

- [DfE Information Sharing Advice \(May 2024\)](#)
- [A 10 step guide to sharing information to safeguard children](#)
- [Data sharing myths busted](#)

Reflective questions:

- What early signs or low-level concerns have I noticed recently, and have I shared them promptly with the right people - or have I hesitated? Why?
- Who else involved with this child or family might hold pieces of the bigger picture, and have I ensured they have the information they need to act effectively?"

Think, Check, Share!

The Information Commissioners Office reinforces this message: staff should feel confident that they can and should share personal information early when safeguarding concerns exist.

[UK Information Commissioner Video](#)

Learning and Legal Framework:

Safeguarding reviews- whether Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSRs), or national thematic analyses consistently highlight a single, repeated theme: **delays or failures in early information sharing are a major contributing factor in cases where children have come to harm.**

- Information was held in separate agencies, and no one had the "full picture" early enough.
- Professionals often waited too long to share concerns, either hoping situations might resolve, or because they were worried about breaching data protection rules.
- In many cases, early low-level concerns, if pieced together sooner, would have triggered earlier intervention, potentially preventing harm.

UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act provides a framework to support early, proactive sharing for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required.

There is no single definition of safeguarding. Sharing information to safeguard children includes: preventing harm; promoting the welfare of a child; and identifying risk in order to prevent harm (especially helpful where the risk may not be obvious to a single person or organisation).

The 7 Golden Rules of Information Sharing provide a quick decision-making guide

1. **GDPR & Data Protection laws are not barriers:** They **enable** safe, appropriate sharing - not prevent it.
2. **Be open and honest:** Explain what information will be shared and why, unless doing so would place a child at increased risk.
3. **Seek advice when in doubt:** Consult managers, safeguarding leads, data protection officers without disclosing unnecessary personal details.
4. **Share with consent where appropriate - but you can share without consent:** GDPR sets a high threshold for consent. If there is a safeguarding risk, you may share information without consent when a lawful basis exists.
5. **Consider safety and wellbeing first:** Your decision to share or not share must prioritise the child's protection.
6. **Ensure sharing is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure:** Share only what is needed, with the right people, in the right way.
7. **Keep a clear record:** Record your decision, what you shared, with whom, and for what purpose, or the reason why you chose not to share.

Practical Reminders for All Practitioners

- You can share information **early** to prevent situations escalating.
- **Information must be relevant, accurate, necessary and proportionate**
- You must follow your organisation's safeguarding pathways and escalation procedures.
- If unsure, always **ask for advice** - never leave a child at risk due to uncertainty.
- It is good practice to inform parents / carers that you are sharing information for these purposes and to seek to work cooperatively with them.