

1 Why do we share information?

Sharing information is an intrinsic part of any practitioner's role. Decisions about how much information to share, with whom and when, can have an impact on individuals' lives. Information sharing helps to ensure that an individual receives the right help at the right time.

Sharing information is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is a key factor identified in many Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews where poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take action that keeps children and young people safe.

2 7 Principles of information sharing

Sharing information should be:

- **Necessary and proportionate to need and level of risk** – Consider how much you need to share and the impact of disclosing information on the subject and any third parties
- **Relevant** – Only relevant information should be shared with those who need it
- **Adequate** – Information should be of sufficient quality to ensure that it can be relied upon
- **Accurate** – Information should be distinguished between fact and opinion and whether it is current or historical
- **Timely** – To prevent delay which could place a child at an increased risk of harm
- **Secure** – Always follow your organisation's policy on handling of personal data
- **Record** – Keep a record of what, when and how information has been shared (see below)

3 When to share information

Consider the following questions to help decide if and when to share:

- Is there a clear legitimate purpose?
- Does information enable an individual to be identified?
- Is consent the most appropriate lawful reason to share information and if so do you have consent?
- Is there a lawful reason to share without consent? i.e. because there is a legal reason to share or because we have a power or duty to share as part of our public task?

4 How to share information

You should:

- Identify how much information to share
- Distinguish fact from opinion
- Ensure that you are giving the right information to the right individual and that it is shared securely
- Where possible, be transparent with the individual, informing them that the information has been shared, as long as doing so does not create or increase the risk of harm to the individual

5 Record keeping

Good record keeping is a vital part of good practice. Your records should clearly indicate what information has been shared and with whom.

If the decision is not to share, it is good practice to record the reasons for this decision and discuss them with the requester.

All information sharing decisions and reasons must be recorded in line with your organisation's procedures or the Children's MARS Information Sharing Guidance.

6 What to do if you are unsure

Practitioners should use their judgement when making decisions about what information to share and should follow their organisation's procedures or the Children's MARS Information Sharing Guidance or consult with their manager if in doubt.

Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Every practitioner must take responsibility for sharing information they hold, and cannot assume that someone else will pass on information, which may be critical to keeping a child safe.

Nobody would be criticised for sharing information they thought necessary to keep a child safe. There have been concerns highlighted nationally where information should have been shared but wasn't.

7 Further guidance

- [Children's MARS Information Sharing Guidance](#)
- [Children's MARS Integrated Multi-Agency Partnership Information Sharing Agreement](#)
- [Children's MARS Memorandum of Understanding](#)
- [Children's MARS Information Sharing Agreement for the learning through scrutiny and assurance activity](#)
- [Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners \(2018\) Department for Education](#)