



Fact Sheet

Information Sharing Guidance

Sharing information is vital for early intervention to ensure that children and young people with additional needs get the services they require. It is also essential to protect children and young people from suffering harm from abuse or neglect and to prevent them from offending.

Information sharing: Practitioners' guide is the first cross-Government guidance for practitioners across the whole of the children's workforce. This guidance complements and supports wider policies to improve information sharing across children's services.

Background

Improving information sharing practice is a cornerstone of the *Every Child Matters* strategy to improve outcomes for children and young people. Statutory guidance on the Children Act 2004 (S10 interagency co-operation and S11 safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children), set out clear expectations for local action to improve information sharing.

It is important that practitioners understand when, why and how they should share information so that they can do so confidently and appropriately as part of their day-to-day practice.

A lot of guidance exists which is specific to sharing information within particular settings. However, as children's services move towards more multi-agency working, practitioners felt that clear guidance was needed in order to support this integrated approach.

Developing the guidance

The guidance has been produced in collaboration with Department for Education and Skills, Department of Health, Home Office, (the then) Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Department of Constitutional Affairs and the Youth Justice Board.

Representatives from a wide range of professional and regulatory bodies including health, education, social care and police, and both statutory and voluntary agencies were invited to share their views on the guidance.

A public consultation attracted over 250 responses. Four national events offered an opportunity for an open debate on the guidance. These events were attended by over 300 practitioners and managers. The views of children and young people were also sought.

The Government's Response to the guidance is available from www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations

Aims of the guidance

Recognising that most decisions to share information require professional judgment, the cross-Government guidance aims to improve practice by giving practitioners across children's services clear guidance on when and how they can share information.

It seeks to provide clarity on the legal framework for practitioners sharing information about children, young people and families.

The guidance and the supporting materials – the case examples, further guidance on legal issues and the training materials - aim to provide practitioners with the tools they need to develop their understanding and confidence in sharing information professionally and lawfully.

Who the guidance is for

The guidance is intended for all practitioners who work with children or young people, employed or volunteers, working in the public, private or voluntary sectors. It is also for practitioners who work in services provided for adults, for example mental health services and drug and alcohol services, as some of the adults accessing those services may have parenting or caring responsibilities.

Guidance content

- **Practitioners' guide** - Includes key points that practitioners should consider before they share information, a step-by-step process, key principles of information sharing, a glossary and signposts to key sources of further guidance.
- **Case examples** - illustrating information sharing in practice.
- **Further guidance on legal issues** - a summary of the laws affecting information sharing in respect of children and young people.

Additionally, a set of training materials is available for local agency and multi-agency training, and for use by providers of initial training and continuous professional development for the children's workforce.

Further information

The guidance and supporting materials are available from www.ecm.gov.uk/informationsharing