



Easy Read Guide: Information Sharing Duty

Sharing Information to Help Keep Children Safe

What is this guide about?

There is a new law about sharing information to help keep children safe and well.

The law says that organisations should usually share information with each other if it helps protect a child or support their welfare.

This includes services such as:

- Children's Social Care
- Schools
- Health services
- Police
- Other safeguarding agencies

The new approach is:

✓ Share information unless there is a good reason not to.

Previously people often asked:

? "Can I share this information?"

Now people should ask:

? "Is there a reason I should not share this information?"

What has changed?

1. Sharing information is now a duty

Before:

- Professionals could decide whether to share information.

Now:

- Organisations have a duty to share information if it helps keep a child safe or supports their welfare.

2. Children do not have to be at high risk

Before:

- Information sharing often happened only when concerns were serious.

Now:

- Information can be shared much earlier.

This includes:

- Early help
- Emerging concerns
- Welfare concerns
- Prevention work
- Unmet needs

3. Welfare is just as important as protection

Information should be shared to:

- Keep children safe
- Understand their needs
- Help families get support
- Prevent problems getting worse

4. Consent is usually not needed

Before:

- Professionals often asked parents or carers for permission.

Now:

- Permission is not needed if information is being shared under the Information Sharing Duty.

Professionals should:

✓ Be open and honest.

✓ Explain what information is being shared and why.

✗ Not give families the impression they can stop information being shared when the law says it should be shared.

5. Confidential information can be shared

Some information is confidential.

For example:

- Health information
- Medical information

The new guidance says confidential information can be shared when it is needed to safeguard a child or promote their welfare.

Professionals must still think carefully about:

- Whether the information is relevant
- Whether it is proportionate
- Whether sharing could harm the child

6. Information about adults may also be important

Sometimes information about adults helps people understand a child's situation.

This may include information about:

- Parents
- Carers
- Siblings
- Family members
- Other adults in the child's life

For example:

- Mental health difficulties
- Domestic abuse
- Substance misuse
- Criminal behaviour
- Imprisonment

7. Information can be shared about children who may harm others

Information may need to be shared when:

- A child is at risk from another child
- A child's behaviour may put others at risk

This helps protect all children involved and make sure support is provided where needed.

8. Data protection is not a barrier

Some people worry that data protection laws stop them sharing information.

The guidance says:

- ✓ Data protection supports information sharing.
- ✓ Information can be shared lawfully when it helps safeguard children.

When should information not be shared?

There is one main exception.

Information may not need to be shared if sharing would be **more harmful to the child than not sharing it**.

Examples may include:

- Creating an immediate danger for the child
- Certain court restrictions
- Serious impact on a police investigation

These are **not** reasons to refuse sharing:

- ✗ Lack of consent
- ✗ Fear of complaints
- ✗ Worry about getting it wrong

✗ Data protection concerns alone

What does this mean for organisations?

Organisations should:

- ✓ Update policies and agreements
- ✓ Train staff
- ✓ Support early help
- ✓ Work together
- ✓ Check that the new duty is being followed

What are the benefits?

The new guidance:

- ✓ Gives clearer rules
- ✓ Supports earlier help
- ✓ Helps organisations work together
- ✓ Reduces confusion about consent
- ✓ Encourages a whole-family approach

What are some concerns?

There may be:

- ⚠ Too much information being shared
- ⚠ More referrals and requests for support
- ⚠ Different organisations interpreting the guidance differently

Need advice?

If you are unsure whether information should be shared, contact:

Children & Families Contact Swindon

✉ contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk

☎ 01793 464646

(Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 4.40pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.00pm)

Emergency Duty Service (outside office hours)

 01793 436699

If information could help keep a child safe or support their welfare, it should usually be shared. Sharing information is now expected unless there is a clear reason that sharing would be more harmful to the child.