**Information for those who work with children and their families**

Good information sharing between professionals is vital in relation to child protection.  Numerous learning and improvement case reviews, such as Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) show that children can be seriously harmed or die when professionals don’t share information.  Professionals should always seek agreement to share information when it is right to do so and where this does not place a child or adult at risk.  However, if there is no agreement, or if information is seen as “third- party”, this should NEVER be used as an excuse for not sharing information, holding a professional’s meeting or having a conversation with a fellow professional when there are good reasons to be worried about risk to a child.

**Golden Rules for Information Sharing**

Some professionals worry about their responsibility to keep information private under the [Data Protection Act 1998](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980029_en_1)– but there are simple ways to make sure you share information appropriately:

1. **Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to** **sharing information**but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. **Be open and honest**with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. **Seek advice**if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
4. **Share with consent where appropriate**and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.
5. **Consider safety and well-being:**Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and** **secure:**Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
7. **Keep a record**of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

Professionals working with children, parents or adults in contact with children, should always share information with children’s social care where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. Sharing information under these circumstances is legitimate and in the public interest.

**London Multi-Agency Safeguarding Data Sharing Agreement**

Historically there have been many data sharing agreements (DSAs), all different, across London borough councils, police BCUs, CCGs, the Probation and London Ambulance Services, voluntary sector groups and more. There has been pressure on national or London-wide groups to agree multiple DSAs for the same purposes, complicated by the fact that different organisations have different geographical boundaries.

Signatories to a DSA are equal parties, but succeeding with an agreed DSA across so many partners is a struggle all of us face regularly. It sometimes occurs that relevant professionals are missed when drafting an agreement, and frustration and confusion occurs.

To improve this, a working group of professionals has achieved an unprecedented level of collaboration to develop **one** agreement, for a selection of DSAs, that all parties across London will sign.

These agreements are the outcome of a multi-agency working group with representation from local authorities, health and police, who have engaged with front line practitioners and other local agencies, like the voluntary sector.

As with any DSA, it is an agreement between equal partners and each organisation has a responsibility to ensure it is correct and reflects their situation. We hope that all parties can feel confident that an experienced group of professionals from multiple specialisms have included all relevant information and requirements.

The Multi-Agency Data Sharing Agreement, the first of the DSAs to be issued, is endorsed by the professionals that worked on it, and, collectively, by the Information Governance for London group (IGfL), and the London Child Safeguarding Partnership.

You can read the agreement 

All parties signing up to the agreement are advised to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment. You can access the London Council's template DPIA

<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/who-we-are/about-us/information-access-and-privacy/data-protection-and-privacy-notice->

If you are an organisation who has not yet signed up to this agreement but would like to do so please contact us to confirm the name and designation of the individual signing up on behalf of the organisation

If you require any support in relation to the above please contact your data protection lead in the first instance.

**Related Documents**

Chapter on Information Sharing in the London Child Protection Procedures here

<https://www.londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/info_sharing.html>