



## **Wokingham Children's Services**

### **Guidance on Information Sharing for Practitioners**

#### **Introduction**

Front-line practitioners who provide services to children, young people and families often have to make decisions on sharing information with other practitioners about those they are involved with. This calls for professional judgment on a case-by-case basis.

The aim of this guidance is to enable practitioners to share information, concerning children and young people and their families, confidently and appropriately. It is not intended to put barriers in the way of information sharing. The aim is to establish common standards for all agencies sharing information. This guidance is not intended to replace existing guidance in relation to Child Protection Procedures. It supports the guidance given under those procedures and also strengthens the legal framework for sharing information when there are lower levels of concern.

#### **What to do if you are worried about a child?**

All those who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work, including practitioners who do not have a specific role in relation to safeguarding children, have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

You are likely to be involved in three main ways:

You may have concerns about a child, and refer those concerns to children's social care or the police. School staff (both teaching and non-teaching) should be aware of the local procedures to be followed for reporting concerns about a particular child. This will normally be via the school's designated senior member of staff or their nominated deputy or if neither are available, another senior member of the school's staff. In emergencies however, contact the police direct on 999.

You may be approached by children’s social care and asked to provide information about a child or family or to be involved in an assessment. This may happen regardless of who made the referral to children’s social care;

You may be asked to provide help or a specific service to the child or a member of their family as part of an agreed plan and contribute to the reviewing of the child’s progress.

<b>Useful Contact Numbers</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>
Referral & Assessment Team (Children’s Safeguarding & Social Care Team)	0118 908 8002
Emergency Duty Team – out of hours	01344 786 543
Thames Valley Police	0845 8505 505
NSPCC 24 hour helpline	0808 800 5000

**To view the Berkshire Child Protection procedures please click on link below:**

<http://proceduresonline.com/berks/index.htm>

**If there are concerns that a child may be at risk of significant harm or an adult may be at risk of serious harm, then follow the relevant procedures without delay.**

**Seek advice if you are not sure what to do at any stage and ensure that the outcome of the discussion is recorded.**

### **Partnership Working**

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on Wokingham Borough Council, as the children services authority, to promote co-operation between the Council and relevant partners. It also places a duty on the relevant partners to co-operate with the Council. It recognises the importance of the sharing of information between the Council and the relevant partners in improving the well being of children.

Information sharing calls for agencies to plan and provide services in a coordinated way. This requires agencies to share personal information about children and young people. Practitioners must build good relationships with colleagues, based on professional respect and trust to help break down organisational and cultural obstacles to an open and positive approach to information sharing. It promotes the sharing of information in the best

interests of the child and actively seeks the consent of parents and young people to information sharing wherever possible.

## **Protecting Individuals Rights**

At the same time there is a requirement to protect the privacy of children and their families and maintain the highest standards of security and good data management. Practitioners who wish to share information must be clear about their responsibilities under current legislation so that families can be confident that their personal data is being handled appropriately.

## **Legal Framework**

There are several statutory frameworks and guidance in relation to sharing information. These include:

The Data Protection Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Common Law duty of confidence

Caldicott Principles

## **Myth buster on data protection**

- The Data Protection Act 1998 is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately.
- Data protection law reinforces common sense rules of information handling. It is there to ensure personal information is managed in a sensible way.
- It helps us strike a balance between the many benefits of public organisations sharing information, and maintaining and strengthening safeguards and privacy of the individual.
- It also helps us balance the need to preserve a trusted relationship between practitioner and client with the need to share information to benefit and improve the life chances of the client or protect the public.

## **Seven Golden Rules for Information Sharing**

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.

## **Support and Training**

Wokingham Children's Services has an Information Sharing E-learning module which all staff can access and use. The training takes up to 30 minutes and you can complete the course in one go or in stages. The course includes real life case studies and a test at the end of the training to check your understanding.

To access the training please type this address into the internet:

<http://www.kwango.com/wokinghamislogin/>

Username: **wokinghamis**

Password: **wokinforsh**

## **Further information**

A range of guidance on Information Sharing can be found at this web address:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/a0072915/information-sharing>