

Richard Cloudesley School

Information Sharing Policy

To find out more about Government guidance see:

- HM Government (2015) [Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#). This guide includes a myth busting section that helps to dispel mistaken beliefs that prevent effective information sharing.

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Information sharing and confidentiality - things to know and issues to consider

Why information sharing matters

It's important to ensure a child or young person and their family understands their personal information will be treated respectfully and confidentially. This provides a safe space for them to be open and honest with the people caring for them.

Establishing this form of trust is fundamental for the provision of safe and effective care, but when working with children and young people, it's important to keep in mind two essential factors:

- timely information sharing is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It enables intervention that crucially tackles problems at an early stage;
- if a child is at risk or suffering significant harm, the law supports you to share information without consent.

Case reviews have shown us that a lack of appropriate and timely information sharing is a key issue. Sharing information will help other professionals who have contact with the family to better understand the risks faced by the child.

You may, for example, have information about issues related to a parent or other adult which may be impacting negatively on the child's wellbeing. This information will contribute to building a clear picture of the child's life. The better the picture, the more quickly appropriate action can be taken to protect a child.

Understanding when information should be shared

Every person has a right to privacy under the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 8), but if you have any worries or doubts about the wellbeing of a child you may have to share personal or confidential data. Sharing information appropriately is key to putting in place effective child protection services, therefore any concerns should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Natalie Fry. Ensure that the outcome of your discussion is recorded.

When making these decisions, the safety and welfare of the child must be the key consideration.

There must be a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing information.

Share information early on, at the first signs of emerging problems. This means support can be put in place at the time it's most likely to help. For example, referring a family to other health or children's services where they can get the care and support they need can be effective preventative action. Issues should be considered objectively and impartially.

Make sure your own cultural background or religious beliefs don't affect your decisions. If you feel you need more advice about particular religious or cultural practices, you could contact a voluntary organisation that has experience of working with a particular community.

Never assume someone else will pass on information about a child, a parent or other adult that may be critical to keeping a child safe. Refer to the Safeguarding Policy for more information on reporting concerns.

What information needs to be shared?

You may need to share information about a child or about a parent or other adult in order to protect the child or for their wellbeing. Decide what is appropriate to share and who it will be shared with in discussion with the DSL.

Identify how much information to share. Think about the purpose for sharing information and share only what you judge is relevant and necessary to fulfil this.

Use language that is clear and precise. Be aware that different agencies use different terminology or may have a different understanding of particular terms.

Be clear about what is factual in the information and what is based on professional opinion or reports from other people.

What to do when sharing information

Make sure all your decisions on information sharing keep the safety and wellbeing of the child and anyone else who may be affected as your first consideration.

Ensure the information you're sharing for the purpose of protecting a child is relevant to that purpose and is accurate, unbiased and up-to-date.

Share information securely and only with the relevant staff who need to have it.

Who to share information with and how to share it

Good information sharing isn't just about what you share. The safety and wellbeing of the child may be at stake and may depend on the way you share information and who you share it with.

Sharing information effectively includes:

- formal face-to-face strategy meetings where ideas can be thoroughly explored
- developing shared plans
- putting in place a shared record for a child receiving services from several agencies
- effective information sharing between teams in the same agency
- sharing information across geographical borders, including efficient transfer of the child's records if they move to a different location.

Information sharing protocols

Secure emails	Wherever possible emails between agencies, including between Whittington Health and Richard Cloudesley School, should be sent via secure email , such as Egress. When using a secure system sensitive information and names of pupils may be included.
Private email systems	Never use a non-school email address to send information about pupils, whether sensitive or not.
School emails <i>i.e. LGFL email addresses.</i>	Even though emails sent from school email to school email are secure, they may then sit on devices or servers for a long period of time. Therefore, always use initials when referring to pupils.
Printed letters and reports	Names and other information should be used in letters and school reports. Reports could always be stored securely. Safeguarding related information must only be stored in the DSL's safeguarding folder.
Email attachment and electronic files	Electronic files must be sent using a password. This includes files stored on cloud based or physical portable drives) The password will be the first name of the young person, all lower case. When naming or sending the file do not include the first name.
Text messages	Always use initials when referring to pupils.
Shared diaries	Always use initials when referring to pupils, for example when adding appointments and meetings. Where there may be confusion about which young person is being referred to please add the class name.