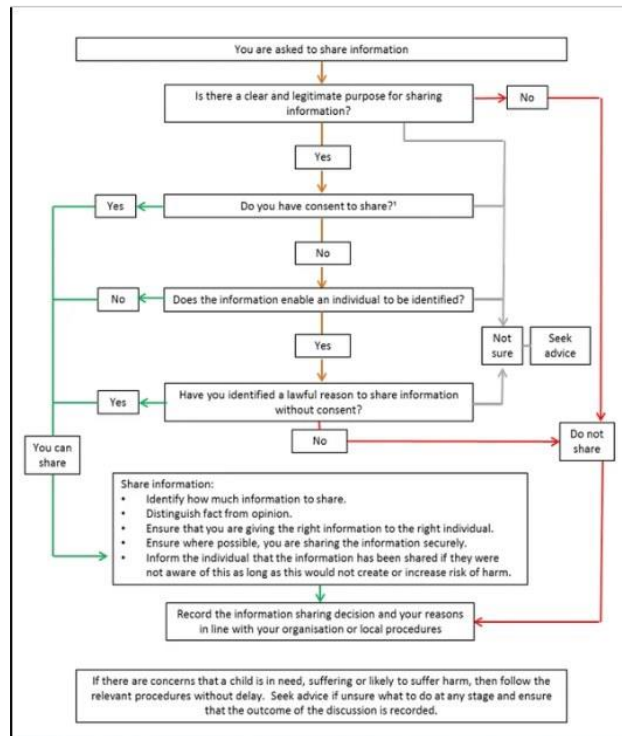# Information Sharing

- Poor or non-existent information sharing is a factor repeatedly identified as an issue in Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews carried out following the death of or serious injury to, a child. In some situations, sharing information can be the difference between life and death.

- It is important to remember that data protection legislation supports the sharing of relevant personal information if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being. In particular, the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR includes 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as one of conditions that allows practitioners to share information with others without consent.

- Whilst consent should be requested wherever appropriate, it should not be the deciding factor when considering sharing information. Safeguarding a child allows a legal basis to override the need for consent.

- Information can be shared at any level of concern for the young person, from single agency support through to Child Protection.

- Data protection legislation acknowledges that skilled practitioners are in the best position to use their professional judgement about when to share information with colleagues working within the same organisation, as well as with those working within other organisations, in order to provide effective early help, to promote their welfare, and to keep children safe from harm.

- Information can be sought and provided for any adult involved with a young person when there is a safeguarding concern. Data protection legislation supports the sharing of information in this context to allow a fuller picture of the young person's circumstances to be known.

- Professionals should follow their organisation's procedures, any information sharing agreements in place with their organisation and their partners, and consult with their legal department/seek legal advice if in doubt. However, at the heart of any discussion should be the consideration of whether sharing information is likely to safeguard and protect a child, young person or adult at risk**.**

- When it is decided whether to share information or not, the professional should record the decision and the reasoning behind this. This will support any future discussions around the safeguarding of the child or information sharing should they arise at a later date.

- To manage data protection whilst sharing information, professionals should consider how much information is needed to be released. When sharing information to support safeguarding, professionals can make a judgement on what should be shared and what should remain confidential. An example of this may be an organisation confirming work with an individual without discussing the details of that work. This allows professionals to support the safeguarding of young people and data protection.

- Information can be sought or provided outside of a safeguarding meeting. This could be via email, telephone call or in-person as is appropriate to the needs of the situation. As above, this should be recorded in line with own organisation's policies.

- It is best practice to hold discussions with the young person and their family at the initial meeting around consent. This provides a foundation for the family's understanding of when information may be requested from others or provided to others. Further to this, professionals should discuss the network around the family at initial meetings. This will support professionals in developing a fuller picture of the family.

- Professionals must take responsibility for sharing information in order to keep children safe from harm; they must not assume someone else will pass on information.

- When sharing or receiving information, it is important that the full implications of that information are understood by everyone involved. Information from one professional may not be understood in the same way by another. This could potentially lead to the risks for the young person not being fully understood and managed by all professionals working with the young person and their family.

- When an agency closes with a child or their family, they should ensure that any safety plans should be shared with any other professionals involved. A shared understanding of the current situation and what actions to take should any additional risks or vulnerabilities arise is important for the child's safety and wellbeing.

- A useful resource is Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners and can be accessed here: Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners - GOV.UK ([1]

For medical professionals, the following guidance offers further guidance in relation to Information Sharing:

- Protecting children and young people: The responsibilities of all doctors - professional standards - GMC (gmc-uk.org)[2]

- Confidentiality: good practice in handling patient information - professional standards - GMC (gmc-uk.org)[3]

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice
[2] https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gmc-uk.org%2Fethical-guidance%2Fethical-guidance-for-doctors%2Fprotecting-children-and-young-people&data=05|01|Mandy.Radley-Mitchell%40lincolnshire.gov.uk|ad3cb3956cd84812b36608db94bd6977|b4e05b92f8ce46b59b2499ba5c11e5e9|0|0|638267313457016559|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D|3000|||&sdata=ViEWXasXLWO7VZIUIZF1DzQDVPEkiFHHAcSpE8HDZtE%3D&reserved=0
[3] https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gmc-uk.org%2Fethical-guidance%2Fethical-guidance-for-doctors%2Fconfidentiality&data=05|01|Mandy.Radley-Mitchell%40lincolnshire.gov.uk|ad3cb3956cd84812b36608db94bd6977|b4e05b92f8ce46b59b2499ba5c11e5e9|0|0|638267313457016559|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D|3000|||&sdata=0eeYa069z3m%2BWfRjpAAA54QUpkJ17gHGEw2N%2Fk5SaRA%3D&reserved=0