



# Information Sharing Guide and Protocol Briefing

**Background:** We know that a common theme, both locally and nationally, in Safeguarding Adults Reviews is communication between agencies and the issue of sharing information. The three Safeguarding Adults Boards have developed a pan-Sussex Information Sharing Guide and Protocol, which aims to support and enable improved communication and information sharing between partner agencies across Sussex that is in line with the legal framework and best practice guidance.

## Why do we need to share information?

Safeguarding Adults Reviews frequently highlight that agencies fail to share information and work jointly. This can lead to serious harm and abuse.

Sharing relevant information with the right people at the right time is vital to good practice and effective safeguarding.

The risk of sharing information is often perceived as higher than it is. Sharing information may highlight a pattern of abuse.

## What if a person does not want you to share their information?

Adults have a right to confidentiality, however, that right is not absolute.

If an adult refuses consent to share information, their wishes should be respected. However, there are instances where a person's wishes can be overridden, including when this:

- places the adult at risk of significant harm;
- would prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a crime; and
- would lead to an unjustified delay in carrying out an enquiry into the abuse or neglect.

The law does not prevent the sharing of sensitive personal information between organisations where the public interest served outweighs the public interest served by protecting confidentiality.

## Practice questions for teams to discuss:

- How do you respond to requests to keep vital safeguarding information confidential?
- Where do you get more guidance on what information you can share if you are uncertain?
- Where do you record what information you have shared and why?
- Do you understand your role about informing an adult that you are sharing their information and what information that is?

## Effective multi-agency communication

Effective multi-agency communication involves:

- Ensuring all relevant agencies are involved such as primary care agencies such as the GP surgery;
- All agencies have a responsibility to share any information they have which may be relevant to safeguarding the adult;
- Keeping relevant agencies informed of meeting outcomes, agreed actions and timescales, including those that sent apologies to invites;
- Good record keeping;
- Storing information securely for as long as it is required; and
- Using your organisation's secure email system, the appropriate Government Security Classification and password protection.

## When someone lacks capacity

The Mental Capacity Act is important in the context of information sharing as those in contact with adults with care and support needs must be able to assess whether someone has the capacity to make decisions about risk, safety and information sharing.

When an individual does not have capacity to give consent to the sharing of information, then a best interest's decision should be made in line with the principles of the Mental Capacity Act.

## Seven golden rules

1. The laws around data protection are not barriers to justified information sharing but are there to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest 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 from other practitioners, or your information governance lead, if you have doubts about sharing the information concerned.
4. Where possible, and it is safe to do so, share information with consent, and where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared.
5. Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared securely and in a timely fashion.
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it, and what you shared, with whom and why.

## For more information on this briefing:

West Sussex SAB:

[SafeguardingAdultsBoard@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:SafeguardingAdultsBoard@westsussex.gov.uk)

East Sussex SAB: [ESSAB.contact@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:ESSAB.contact@eastsussex.gov.uk)

Brighton and Hove SAB: [SAB@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:SAB@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

## Joint working and resolving disagreements

Organisations need to share info to:

- Help people get the right support to reduce risks and promote wellbeing;
- Prevent death or serious harm that may increase the need for care and support;
- Coordinate safeguarding responses to improve best practice;
- Enable early interventions to prevent escalation of risk;
- Reveal patterns of abuse that were previously undetected and identify risk to others; and
- Help identify people who may pose a risk to others.

## Additional information and further reading

[Sussex Information Sharing Guide and Protocol](#)

[Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy Procedures: Sharing Information](#)

[Brighton and Hove Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

[East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

[West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

[SCIE: Safeguarding Adults, Sharing Information](#)

[HM Government Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services.](#)

[Information Commissioner Office Data Sharing Checklist](#)

## Concerned about an adult? Contact:

Brighton and Hove: Tel: 01273 295555

East Sussex: Tel: 0345 60 80 191

West Sussex: [use the online form](#)