



Inter agency information sharing to protect children and young people and meet their needs January 2008

“It is everyone’s job to make sure that children in Renfrewshire are safe.”

Introduction

Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee has prepared this paper to set down agreed principles and priorities for the sharing of information to protect children between and within agencies. We know from many public inquiries into the abuse or death of a child, that it is essential that professionals know when to share information to allow needs to be identified and interventions to be appropriate. This refers not only to clear child protection issues but crucially also when there is a general concern or “worry” about a child. The safety, welfare and well-being of a child is paramount when making decisions to lawfully share information with or about them.

It is important to note that you need not deal directly with children in order to identify such information. Information may relate to an adult, e.g. where a worker’s client or patient is the parent or carer of a child.

When to Share Information

- **All** agencies and services in Renfrewshire be they statutory, voluntary or private must be clear that where there is a reasonable cause to suspect that a child or young person may be suffering or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, they should share this information with the appropriate agency i.e. social work or the Police, in line with Inter agency Child Protection Guidance without delay.
- Where assessments are being made, as to whether or not a child or young person will be at risk of harm, professionals and agencies should share relevant information that they hold.
- Where significant concerns have been identified relating to the ongoing welfare or protection of a child, professionals and agencies have a duty to share information on an ongoing basis to contribute to the effective protection of a child or young person.

Consent and Confidentiality

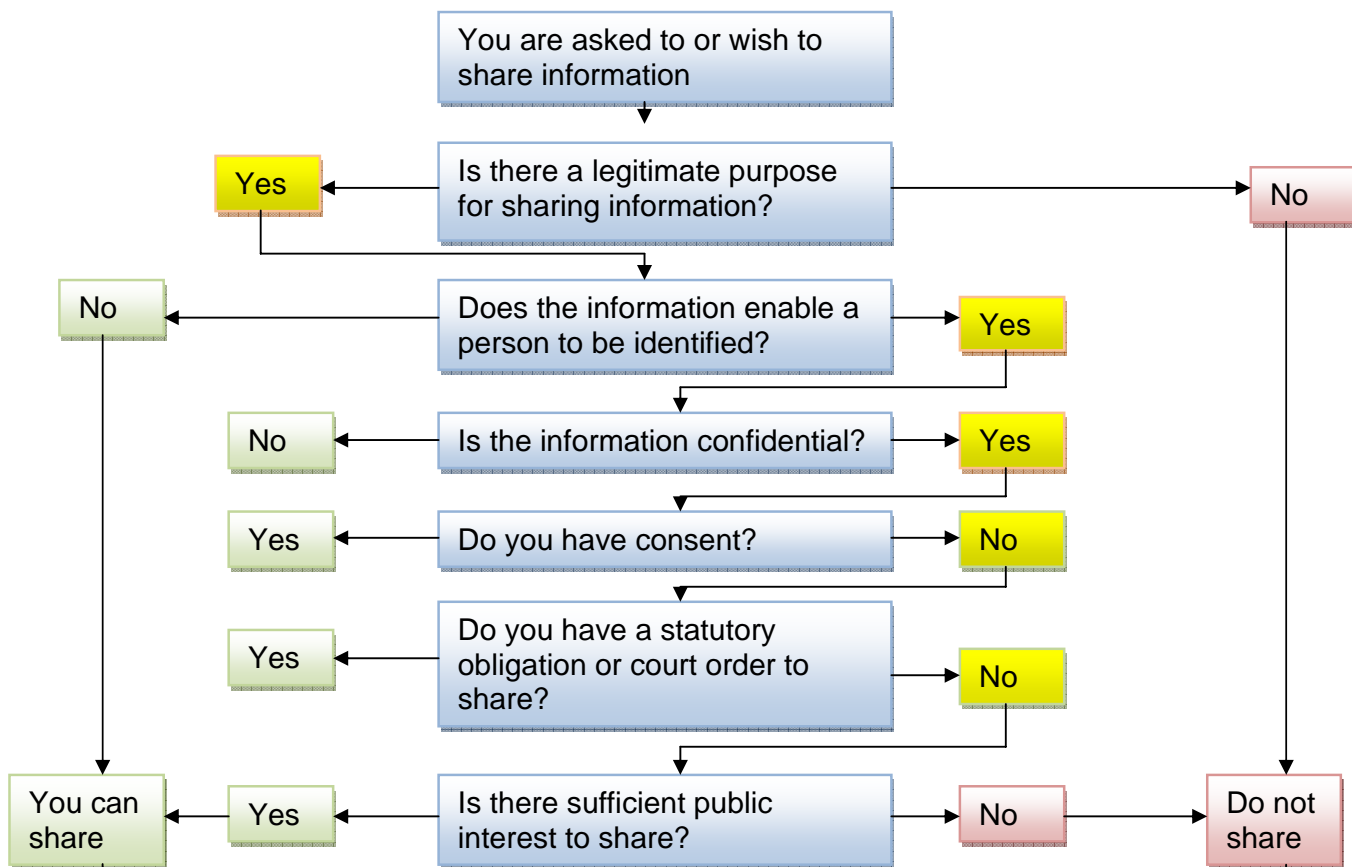
- Children, young people and their families have a right to privacy and confidentiality. Professionals in all agencies have an obligation to safeguard the confidentiality of personal information through Data Protection Act 1998, common law duty of confidentiality, contracts of employment and also by professional codes of conduct. However, all of the above can be overridden to ensure the safety, welfare and well-being of the child are the paramount consideration.
- The reasons why information needs to be shared and why particular actions need to be taken should be communicated openly and honestly with children, young people and their families.
- Where possible, consent to share information should be sought from the child and/or their parent or carer, the exception to this being where there is potential for harm to the child or young person or where the child or young person has already been identified as being at risk.
- Information shared should be limited to those workers or agencies that need to know.
- All decisions to share or not to share information should be recorded.

Protecting Children and Young People

It is everyone's job to make sure children in Renfrewshire are safe. If professionals have concerns about a child or young person being at risk of harm they should share these concerns with the appropriate agencies and not wait until they are asked for information. If asked for information about a child or young person who is deemed to be at risk professionals should share information. Children's welfare is a more important consideration than confidentiality.

If in any doubt about whether or not to share information, professionals should seek advice from their manager, supervisor, child protection advisor or Caldicott Guardian.

Flowchart of key principles for information sharing



Share information:

- Identify how much information to share.
- Distinguish fact from opinion.
- Ensure that you are giving the information to the right person.
- Inform the person that the information has been shared if they were not aware of this and if it would not create or increase risk of harm.

Record the information sharing decision and your reasons, in line with your agency's procedures or local protocols.

Seek advice from your manager, supervisor, child protection advisor and Caldicott Guardian if you are not sure what to do at any stage and ensure that the outcome of the discussion is recorded.