

Information Sharing

Fact sheet

Embedding information sharing



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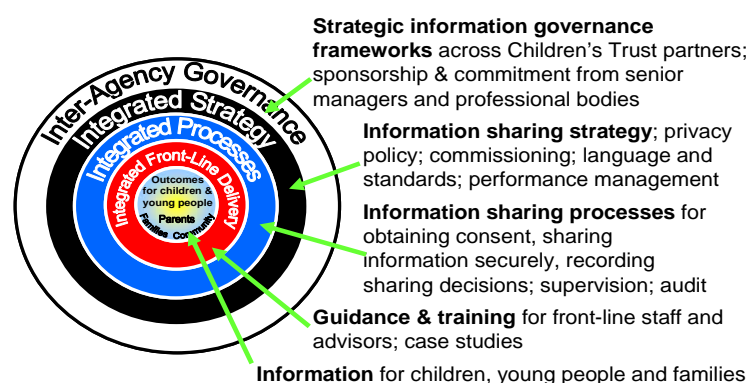
Embedding good practice in information sharing

Information sharing is key to the Government's goal of delivering better public services that are coordinated around the needs of the individual. It is essential to enable early intervention and preventative work, for safeguarding and promoting welfare and for wider public protection.

The cross-government *Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers* is available to help people understand how to share information legally and professionally. This guidance is most relevant to those practitioners at the front-line who have to make case-by-case decisions about whether and what to share, and for managers and advisors who support them.

However guidance and training on their own are not enough. It is important that local areas address all relevant aspects of governance, strategy, process and front-line delivery. People at all levels in organisations must understand and play their part in ensuring that good practice in information sharing is deeply embedded in the organisation's working practices. Commitment must be across the board.

Embedding information sharing at all levels - examples:



Toolkit for senior / project managers

The *Embedding information sharing toolkit* provides a high level view of how organisations can address the key barriers and levers for effective information sharing. It explains that, to embed information sharing, organisations must take positive steps to:

- **champion** information sharing
- **plan and manage** the implementation of improvements in information sharing practice
- **create** the environment for change in information sharing practice
- **maintain** the momentum
- **measure** performance

The toolkit includes lists of suggested activities against each of these objectives, alongside real examples of these activities from different areas and organisations.

Suggested activities include:

- clearly stating the organisational / senior management position on information sharing;
- building information sharing principles into organisational governance and policies;
- consulting all staff and using their suggestions to build a change plan with clear objectives and targets;
- providing access to the cross-government information sharing guidance and any sector or service specific guidance and encouraging all staff to undertake training on information sharing;
- focusing on building skills and confidence in making professional judgements (rather than relying on formal agreements or protocols);
- communicating messages related to information sharing to all staff;
- establishing support mechanisms and encouraging the development of support networks at all levels;
- building into supervision, continuous professional development and performance frameworks.

Organisational policies – information sharing governance frameworks

An information sharing governance framework is good practice. It must always recognise the importance of professional judgement in information sharing at the front-line and should focus on how to improve practice in information sharing within and between agencies.

Information sharing protocols

Information sharing protocols (formal agreements between agencies) are not required before front-line practitioners can share information about a person. By itself, the lack of an information sharing protocol must never be a reason for not sharing information that could help a practitioner deliver services to a person. This view is supported by the Information Commissioner's Office:

“An Information Sharing Protocol is not a useful tool for managing the ad hoc information sharing which all practitioners find necessary. Most importantly it is not intended to be a substitute for the professional judgement which an experienced practitioner will use in those cases and should not be used to replace that judgement.” **Information Commissioner's Office**

Role of the Children's Trust Board

The Children's Trust Board has an important role in supporting and promoting the sharing of information by services which affect children, young people or their families. Boards should support activities designed to build the confidence of, and empower, practitioners to use their professional judgement in decisions related to children's well-being, and to foster trust and professional understanding between services. For example, Children's Trust Boards could take the lead in developing information sharing governance frameworks that would establish common policies and standards across all organisations as part of their work to develop the Children and Young People's Plan.

Role of other organisations in embedding information sharing

National organisations, professional and representative bodies have a part to play as well as service organisations. The exact role will depend on the nature of the organisation but could include:

- references in occupational, induction and training standards and codes of practice;
- developing sector specific case examples or guidance;
- providing sources of impartial advice and support for information sharing issues.

Further information

To find out more or to obtain copies of the *Embedding information sharing toolkit*, the information sharing guidance and supporting tools go to www.dcsf.gov.uk/ecm/informationsharing