



## Information Sharing Protocol for schools

### Purpose and Aim

Sunningdale School's whole-school Information Sharing Protocol aims to provide clear direction to staff and others about expected codes of behaviour in the sharing of information of a confidential nature. The protocol also aims to make explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures to keep children and adults safe in our school.

### Information Sharing

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. A key factor identified in many serious case reviews (SCR's) has been a failure by practitioners to record information, to share it, to understand its significance and then take appropriate action. This protocol aims to set out clear standards required by everyone.

### The Seven golden rules of information sharing

Sunningdale School follows the Government golden rules of information sharing and these are embedded into everyday practice

### Remember that the Data Protection Act

- 1) **Is not a barrier to sharing** information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
- 2) **Be open and honest** with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) 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** if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
- 4) **Share with consent where appropriate** and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information

without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.

**5) Consider safety and well-being:** Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.

**6) Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure:** Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.

**7) Keep a record** of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

### **Legislation guidelines**

The Education Act 2002, section 175 (for maintained schools and settings), the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014 (for Academies/Free Schools) and the Education non maintained Special schools (England) Regulation 2011 sets out the need for all schools/settings to have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place.

The legislation also sets out the duty to work co-operatively with external organisations. Although the legislation for Data Protection and Human rights is in place, the learning from serious case reviews is clear, ‘Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm’ (Information Sharing, 2015) and therefore both internal and external procedures should always be in place for sharing information.

Section 10 and 14B of the Children Act 2004, is explicit in highlighting the need for all agencies to share information with each other, the Local Authority and the LSCB.

### **Information sharing internally within the school/setting**

Sharing information either verbally, electronically or in paper format between members of your workforce requires clear direction in terms of consistency and safe practice.

All staff should be fully aware of the school/setting’s expectations when sharing information about children, adults and their families. Any information that is shared could be requested by the individual or another agency in the future.

Therefore best practice would recommend that information is accurate, factual and does not include personal interpretation or recommendation. Any recordings that are made that are not part of the central, secure recording process must not identify an individual child, adult or their family. In these circumstances the use of initials and year group would be appropriate.

### **Information sharing externally to parents and multi agency partners**

The same principles of sharing information internally, will apply to those members of staff who due to their role and responsibility have permission to share information with parents and multi-agency partners.

In addition to this, best practice would recommend that all conversations are recorded and held centrally and securely. Information that is shared externally either electronically or in paper format needs to be sent in a secure method. For example information that is restricted should be sent password protected (electronically) or recorded delivery (paper format) so that it can be tracked and accounted for. Each school or setting should have clear and consistent protocols for this discharge.

### **Information Sharing for Child Protection**

Information Sharing is necessary in the safeguarding and protection of children and all staff within school must follow the school's Child Protection Policy where there is any evidence that a child is at risk of Significant Harm, through observation or disclosure from the child.

Significant Harm is defined in The Children's Act 1989 as the ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and physical abuse) or the Impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural) as compared to a similar child.

Note: harm now includes the impairment of a child's health or development as a result of witnessing the ill treatment of another person.

*(Adoption and Children Act 2002)*

### **Internal Reporting for Child Protection**

At any point, if staff believe in their professional opinion a child is at risk of significant harm they must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (s) immediately.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads are Mrs. Celia Wright and Mr. James Waller

Information sharing is also necessary where there are concerns around the behaviour or practice of adults within the setting either employed staff, contractors or visitors. If there are any issues raised about the conduct of any adult on site either towards a child or another adult this must be reported directly to the Head teacher (See Confidential Reporting/Whistleblowing Policy)

The Headteacher is Mrs. Celia Wright

### **External Reporting for Child Protection**

The role of the DSL is to make a decision based on the information shared about the risk of harm to the child. If the child is deemed to be at risk of significant harm from a person who has care, custody or control of them then an external referral will be made to the MASH team in Sunderland via the Customer Service Network on (0191) 520 5555. Firstly this will be verbally, followed up in writing. The DSL may also wish to involve the police if the concern is of a criminal nature in which case they would contact the protection of vulnerable people unit on 03456 043 043.

If the child is not deemed at risk of significant harm but is in need of support and help a referral to Strengthening families can be made with consent and agreement from parents. This involves help and support without the need for statutory intervention.

**Under Keeping Children Safe In Education 2015 (flow diagram page 9) it states 'If at any point, there is a risk of immediate risk of serious harm to a child a referral should be made to children's social care immediately. Anybody can make a referral. This would be in exceptional circumstance only'.**

### **External Information Sharing for Allegations/Complaints**

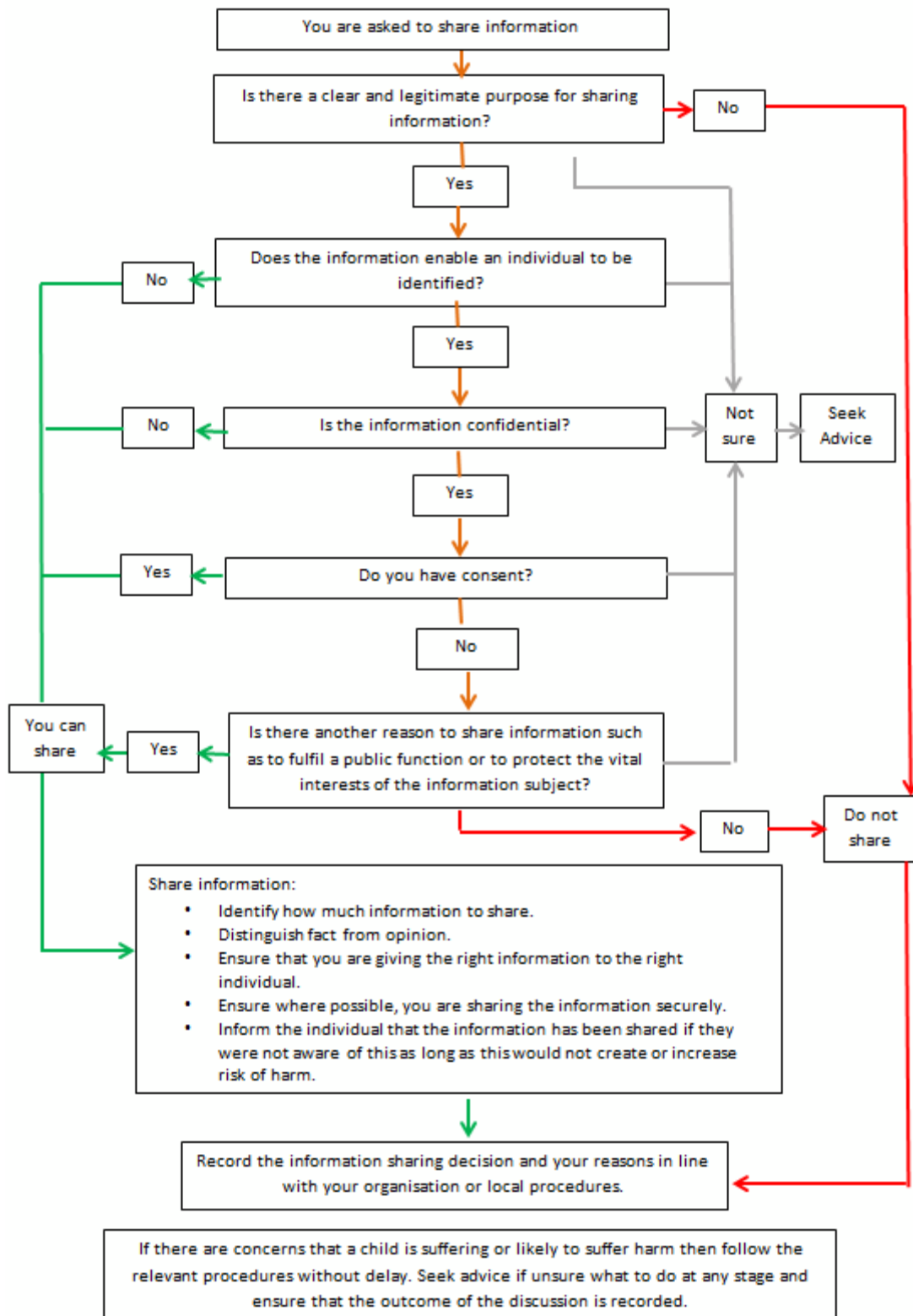
The role of the Headteacher is to make a decision about the risk of harm towards a child from another adult employed, working or visiting the school. If a child or adult discloses harm by another adult then the Headteacher must contact the Designated Officer, Sarah Storer (0191) 520 5555 for immediate advice.

If the disclosure/allegation is made against the Headteacher/Principal then it must be reported to the Chair of Governors who will contact the Designated Officer.

If the disclosure/allegation is made against the School/Setting/Regime the Local Authority and OFSTED should be notified.

In addition, the LSCB can require an individual or body to comply with a request for information, as outlined in Section 14B, Children Act 2004. This can only take place when the information requested is for the purpose of enabling or assisting the LSCB to perform its functions.

The following flow chart (page 12 information sharing) can support you in understanding when and how to share information:



Please note that this protocol should be read in conjunction and be consistent with the:

*Child Protection Policy*

*Looked After Children Policy*

*Allegation Management Policy*

*Complaints Policy*

*Whistleblowing Policy*

*Intimate Care Policy*

*Medication Policy*

*Use of Reasonable Force Policy*

*Record Retention Policy*

*Children Act, (2004)*

*Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)*

*Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (2015)*