



UK Government

Statutory guidance for the information sharing duty

Government consultation

Launch date 2 June 2026

Respond by 14 July 2026

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Introduction

Keeping children safe is a priority for this Government, and for too long poor information sharing has been identified as a contributory factor to serious child safeguarding incidents. Effective information sharing is essential to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, to stop them from falling through the cracks. Where information is not shared in a timely and proportionate way, opportunities to identify need early, provide support, and prevent harm escalating can be missed.

As found in the [Independent Review of Children's Social Care 2022](#), and further evidenced by the Department's 2023 Report to Parliament, [Improving multi-agency information sharing](#), difficulty interpreting and applying legislation has hindered effective information sharing, particularly in cases where there is no clear evidence of significant harm. Safeguarding practitioners therefore called for greater clarity on sharing information which falls below the statutory threshold for action under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and for the use of a child identifier to improve confidence that all organisations are talking about the same child and streamline the information sharing process.

In response, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act introduces, for the first time, a statutory Information Sharing Duty. This duty, under the new section 16LA of the Children Act 2004, places a clear legal expectation on relevant organisations to share information where it is relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is intended to provide clarity, confidence and consistency across the system.

This draft statutory guidance explains how the duty should be applied in practice. It is designed to support organisations and practitioners to understand when information must be shared, how professional judgement should be applied, and how information sharing can take place lawfully and proportionately.

Purpose of this guidance

This is the first time statutory guidance has been issued on the operation of the Information Sharing Duty, building on the Department's previous non-statutory advice on information sharing more broadly. The guidance seeks to do more than restate legal provisions. It aims to support a cultural shift in how information sharing is understood and practised across safeguarding systems.

In particular, the guidance is intended to:

- reinforce that information sharing is a core safeguarding and welfare activity
- encourage earlier and more proactive sharing, including where concerns relate to emerging need or prevention rather than harm; and
- support practitioners to act with confidence, knowing that the law enables and requires relevant information to be shared where it may help other organisations safeguard or promote a child's welfare.

- Clarify that effective multi-agency information sharing should be understood as a dialogue between relevant agencies, and hence the acknowledgement of information received, and communication of outcomes is important to understand what action has been taken.

The guidance also seeks to address long-standing confusion and inconsistency by clarifying the relationship between information sharing and issues such as consent, confidentiality, data protection and statutory thresholds.

It will replace the Department's existing non-statutory advice, [Information sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers](#), and should be read alongside the statutory guidance, [Working together to safeguard children 2026](#).

We also expect to deliver other implementation support measures following the publication of statutory guidance, including materials to make children and families aware of changes under the information sharing duty.

Who this is for

This consultation is open to the public. The following list provides examples of interested parties in England, where the Duty applies, but is not exhaustive:

- Local authorities
- NHS bodies (such as Integrated Care Boards and NHS Trusts)
- Police Forces
- National Crime Agency and other law enforcement bodies, including British Transport Police, Police and Crime Commissioners, Mayors and Police Authorities.
- Probation services
- Youth offending teams
- Prison services (including governors or directors of prisons and secure training centres)
- Schools and education settings
- Designated childcare settings
- Services delivering safeguarding functions on behalf of organisations listed in section 11 of the Children Act, such as GPs.

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 2 June 2026.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team by email:

ISD.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: coordinator.consultations@education.gov.uk, telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The response

The results of the consultation and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in Autumn 2026.

About this consultation

Given the significance of this guidance, and its role in shaping practice across multiple sectors, the government is consulting widely to ensure that it is clear, usable and effective in practice. In particular, we want to understand whether the draft guidance:

- is clearly understood by those to whom it applies;
- gives practitioners confidence to share information earlier, and appropriately;
- supports lawful, proportionate engagement with children and families;
- can be implemented effectively within existing local arrangements and systems; and
- is likely to lead to meaningful and lasting changes in information sharing culture and practice.

The consultation recognises that safeguarding is delivered across diverse settings and professions, and that successful implementation will depend on shared understanding, trust and practical feasibility.

We would like to hear your views on our guidance.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations on GOV.UK](#) to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request an alternative format of the form.

By email

ISD.consultation@education.gov.uk

By post

Sheila Shuttlewood
Department for Education
5th floor Sanctuary Buildings,
Great Smith Street
London, SW1P 3BT

Deadline

The consultation closes on 14 July 2026.

Consultation Questions

About you

Consultation question 1

To help us analyse our responses, could you please tell us in what capacity you are responding to this consultation. As a... [Select all that apply]

- Member of the public
- Director of Children's Services
- Chief Executive of a local authority
- Local authority practice leader
- Local authority – other
- Social worker
- Social work team member
- Family support worker
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
- Substance misuse worker
- Voluntary, community and charity worker
- Residential children's home worker
- Educational institution (e.g. early years setting, school, alternative provision setting, college, university)
- Academic
- Health practitioner
- Police officer or staff
- Youth justice worker
- Probation officer
- Youth worker
- Other: If you chose 'Other' or wish to clarify your response, please describe the role that best describes you
- Prefer not to say

Statutory guidance for the information sharing duty

For all questions in this section, respondents select one of the following answers: **Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.**

These questions relate to the statutory guidance overall, written with the intention of increase practitioner confidence in sharing information relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, in order to improve the effectiveness and consistency of multi-agency information sharing.

Consultation question 2

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance helps you to feel more confident sharing information relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children?

Consultation question 3

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance will support earlier information sharing, where concerns relate to emerging need or prevention, rather than harm?

This question refers primarily to Chapter 1: The Information Sharing Duty, supplemented by content throughout the guidance, including examples, that illustrate the new legal duty.

Consultation question 4

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance effectively sets out the updated legal framework for information sharing to safeguard and promote the welfare of children?

This question is focused on the content within the guidance relating to 'detriment', within Chapter 1 and set out in examples throughout.

Consultation question 5

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance makes clear when and how to consider detriment, and that this should only apply in limited and exceptional circumstances?

This question relates to Chapter 2: Understanding what to share, intended to illustrate what kinds of information are encompassed by the information sharing duty, and the value of the information each organisation holds to building a fuller understanding of a child's circumstances.

Consultation question 6

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance, supplemented by examples, makes clear what kinds of information fall under the information

sharing duty, including information held about other individuals connected to a child?

The following questions are relevant to Chapter 3: Misinterpreted barriers to information sharing, intended to dispel common misconceptions that can inhibit effective information sharing. This includes content on data protection, the complexities of 'consent' and the common law duty of confidentiality.

Consultation question 7

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance, supplemented by examples, makes clear the role of data protection legislation, including alternative lawful bases to consent?

Consultation question 8

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance makes clear that the common law duty of confidentiality does not apply when sharing information in compliance with the information sharing duty?

This question refers primarily to Chapter 4: Practical application and information flows, intended to set out what appropriate and effective implementation might look like.

Consultation question 9

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the guidance is useful for understanding how the duty is best operationalised on a local level, including how information should flow between organisations at different points in the system?

Data Sharing Agreement

This question refers to the Data Sharing Agreement template included within the annex of the guidance. It focuses on the implementation of the information sharing duty at a strategic level, through seeking agreement on the kinds of information that should be shared, and the appropriate channels through which information should flow.

Consultation question 10

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the data sharing agreement template will support local implementation of the information sharing duty?

[Select one answer: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.]

Content overall

The following questions can be answered with reference to specific parts of the guidance or Data Sharing Agreement, or to the guidance and/or Data Sharing Agreement overall.

Consultation question 11

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us to improve this guidance and/or Data Sharing Agreement, including any barriers or enablers to effective implementation?

[Free text]

Consultation question 12

Beyond statutory guidance, what kinds of other support (if any) would be helpful in supporting you to effectively apply the Information Sharing Duty in practice?

[Free text]

Equalities Impact Assessment

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Secretary of State, when exercising the functions of the Secretary of State, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Government is carefully considering how these revisions might have an impact, whether positive or negative, on individuals and groups who share protected characteristics and those who do not. We will undertake a full equality impact assessment as part of our response to this consultation.

Consultation question 13

Do you have any overall comments about the potential impact, whether positive or negative, of our proposed changes on those who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?

Where you identify any negative impacts, we would also welcome suggestions of how you think these might be mitigated.

[Free text]

Handling of your response

Consultation question 14

Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

[Select one from: Yes / No. If 'Yes' please explain your answer.]

Consultation question 15

In sharing findings from this consultation, may we quote from your response?

[Select one from: Yes - anonymously, Yes – attribute to my organisation, No.]

Consultation question 16

May we contact you if we have any follow-up questions about your response?

[Yes / No. If yes, please provide your email address]

To help us analyse the responses, please use the online system wherever possible. Visit www.education.gov.uk/consultations to submit your response. Please note that this consultation applies to England only.

We know that not everyone will wish or feel able to answer all of the questions in this consultation. You are encouraged to answer the questions you would like to respond to, but you do not have to respond to all of them.

Privacy notice

The personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) that you provide in response to this consultation is processed by the Department for Education as a data controller in accordance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, and your personal information will only be used for the purposes of this consultation. The Department for Education relies upon the lawful basis of article 6 (1) (e) of the UK GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for conducting consultations as part of our function.

We may share information we hold about you with certain organisations, where the law allows it, or we have a legal obligation to do so. There may be some circumstances where we'll need to share information about you with others without your consent. For example, this might be to prevent or detect a crime, or to produce anonymised statistics for research purposes. In all cases, we'll comply with the Data Protection Act 2018.

The personal information will be retained for a period of 12 months following the closure of the consultation period, after which it will be securely destroyed. You can read more about what the Department for Education does when we ask for and hold your personal information in our personal information charter.

Confidentiality notice

Information provided in response to consultations, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want all, or any part, of a response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential. If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.



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