

New Information Sharing Duty comes into force on 30 September 2026

From 30 September 2026, a new statutory [Information Sharing Duty](#) will come into force across England, introducing a clear legal expectation on organisations and practitioners to share information with one another where it is relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The guidance refers to section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 (s16LA), as amended by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act, and replaces the Department for Education's existing non-statutory guidance on information sharing.

The new duty aims to address one of the most frequently identified barriers in serious safeguarding incidents, where poor information sharing has been a contributory factor to children not receiving the right support or protection. The guidance aims to promote consistent implementation and support a cultural shift in how information sharing is understood and practised across organisations.

What does the Duty mean?

The core requirement of the Information Sharing Duty is for relevant organisations to share information where it is necessary and proportionate to safeguard or promote a child's welfare.

The duty applies to information that may help another relevant person exercise their functions, including to assess risk, make a decision, provide support or take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child, including where a child may pose a risk to others.

Importantly, the duty is not limited to situations where a child meets a specific statutory threshold, including significant harm. It also applies to information that may support:

- Early help
- Prevention and intervention services
- Assessment and planning
- Wider child welfare needs.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, as a term, is separate from any local or statutory threshold for services. Where organisations and practitioners hold information relating to safeguarding and promoting welfare and determine that information may help another organisation carry out its relevant functions – including assess need, make a decision, provide support or take action – relevant information **MUST be shared.**

Who does the Duty apply to?

The duty applies to organisations listed under section 11 of the Children Act 2004, those delivering safeguarding and welfare functions on their behalf, and designated childcare and education settings, including:

- Local authorities and district councils that provide children's and other types of services, including children's and adult social care, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing authorities and youth services
- NHS organisations and agencies and the independent sector, including NHS England, ICBs, NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts and general practitioners
- The police, including Police and Crime Commissioners and the chief officer of each police force in England and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime where they exist
- The British Transport Police
- Education, including Early years
- The Probation Service
- Youth justice services
- The Probation Service
- Directors of secure training centres (STCs)

The guidance may also be helpful for practitioners working with vulnerable adults and adults who could pose a risk to children.

Are there any exceptions?

The Information Sharing Duty does not apply in extremely limited circumstances where a practitioner, acting on behalf of their organisation, determines, through professional judgement, that sharing information would be more detrimental to the child than not sharing.

Examples may include situations where information sharing could:

- Place a child at immediate risk of harm
- Compromise a criminal investigation
- Contravene a court order or other legal restriction

The guidance stresses that these circumstances are expected to be exceptional.

What should agencies be doing now?

With the Information Sharing Duty coming into force on 30 September 2026, agencies should ensure they are prepared by:

- Reviewing information sharing guidance within policies and procedures
- Familiarising staff with the new statutory guidance
- Including within training and providing awareness sessions
- Embedding the principles within safeguarding practice and decision-making processes

The Department for Education has also published template Data-Sharing Agreements (DSAs) to support local implementation of the Information Sharing Duty. Two templates have been issued, operating at different levels:

Tier 1 Template DSA operates at the strategic, multi-agency level and covers the overall framework for information sharing to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across the partnership.

Tier 2 Template DSA provides a more detailed agreement setting out the specific arrangements that may be needed for a particular information sharing initiative, for example, a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or a specific programme.

The guidance and templates can be accessed at: [Information sharing to safeguard children and young people - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/information-sharing-to-safeguard-children-and-young-people)

For local advice or implementation support, practitioners should contact their organisation's safeguarding lead.

Dispelling common myths

The Information Sharing Duty addresses several common misconceptions that have historically acted as barriers to effective information sharing and early intervention.

"The UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 prevent me from sharing information."

No. Data protection legislation provides a framework for safe and lawful information sharing, rather than preventing it. The Information Sharing Duty creates a clear statutory obligation to share relevant information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Organisations must still ensure that any information sharing is necessary, proportionate and compliant with data protection requirements.

"I must always obtain consent from parents or children before sharing information."

No. Consent is not required where information sharing is necessary, lawful and proportionate to safeguard or promote a child's welfare. While practitioners should aim to be transparent and work collaboratively with children and families where appropriate, the absence of parental or child consent should not be used as a reason to withhold relevant information.

"Information sharing is only appropriate where a child meets the threshold for statutory intervention."

No. The Information Sharing Duty is not limited to situations where a child meets a high statutory threshold, such as significant harm or a Section 47 enquiry. Information should be shared whenever it is relevant to safeguarding or promoting a child's welfare, including in relation to emerging needs, early help, prevention and unmet vulnerabilities, before concerns escalate.

"I'm not sure whether the information I hold is relevant."

The Information Sharing Duty encourages practitioners to consider whether information may be relevant to safeguarding and promoting a child's welfare. Information that appears insignificant in isolation may, when combined with information held by other agencies, contribute to a more complete understanding of a child's circumstances, needs or risks.

"The Information Sharing Duty requires blanket information sharing across agencies."

The law does not require blanket information sharing. Information should be shared only when it is relevant, necessary and proportionate to safeguarding or promoting a child's welfare. The duty does not apply in extremely limited circumstances where a practitioner reasonably considers that sharing would be more detrimental to the child than not sharing. Professional judgement therefore remains central to decision-making.

"Sharing confidential information will put practitioners at risk of breaching confidentiality obligations."

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 provides important legal protection. Section 16LA of the Children Act 2004, inserted by the Act, states that a disclosure made in accordance with the Information Sharing Duty does not breach any obligation of confidence owed by the person making the disclosure. This is intended to give practitioners greater confidence in sharing information appropriately for safeguarding purposes while continuing to exercise professional judgement.