

## Sharing well

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*A guide to sharing and receiving information to assist individuals who seek our help*

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### What is Changing Futures?

*Changing Futures Cambridgeshire & Peterborough* is about improving outcomes for people with multiple disadvantage. Multiple disadvantage means someone experiencing three of five of homelessness, mental health issues, substance misuse, domestic abuse and offending behaviour, at any one time. Changing Futures does this by encouraging involvement of people with lived experience at all stages of our system and service design and looking at how our partnerships affect people.

This guide explains how partners across the system can share and receive information to assist individuals who are seeking help.

### About this guide

- This guide has been developed by the Information Governance Team at Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council in response to practitioner concerns about sharing information using Trusted Persons Approaches. You can read more about Trusted Person Approaches [here](#).
- It has been reviewed and developed by other information governance teams in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough at the Information Management Board and by practitioners who will use it.
- The guide will be updated regularly to ensure all future learning that aids collaboration in partnerships through good information sharing is considered.
- This version was produced on 20 March 2026. To check for updated versions please visit [add link to website] where you will also find other resources associated with sharing well.

### An enabler not a barrier

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality are the main legal framework for making decisions around information sharing.

None of these stop us sharing information when we need to do so. In fact, they reflect the fact that providing services and support relies on good information sharing.

Remember, sharing well also requires us to act appropriately when we receive information that may impact on an individual's health, social or other needs.

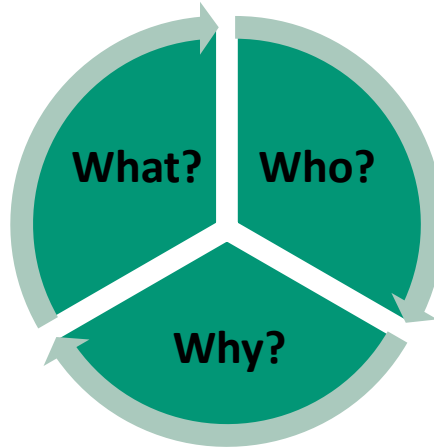
### What we all need

Providing a good service relies on having access to information that is up to date, that you can trust and is available when you need it.

- We need to understand the challenges a person is facing so we can consider how best to support them.
- We then need to pass on relevant details to other organisations when they are best placed to help.
- We need those organisations to be confident in using the information and feel empowered to act on it.
- We also need those organisations to share information in return so a joined-up service can be provided to the individual.

### The key principles for information sharing

Information sharing decisions broadly involve considering what is being asked of you, who is asking and why they are doing so. It's important to think of this as an evolving process rather than an ordered checklist. All three parts impact on each other, so the best approach is to consider all three and then go around again as required, every step along the way. Throughout, keep in mind your role and the responsibilities of the organisation you are acting for. Is the sharing consistent with what you are required to do, either to provide a service or to meet a legal obligation? If you're not sure, check with your manager or supervisor.



#### What is needed?

- \* Are you sure of what is being asked of you?
- \* What is the context?
- \* How urgent is the matter?
- \* Can you help or is someone elsewhere better placed to assist?

#### Who is asking?

- \* Consider the context. Does it make sense that they are involved?
- \* What authority or consent is it reasonable to expect them to have in the circumstances?
- \* **For example**, someone genuinely concerned for their neighbour wouldn't be expected to have some form of written consent to raise an issue about them. Whilst you should be cautious in what information you share back with the neighbour, you can still accept the information and take initial steps to act upon it.

#### Why?

- \* What is the purpose and how is it going to impact on the individual?
- \* Does this seem a reasonable and appropriate way of doing it?

**For example**, your standard process for ‘Who’ might involve a signed consent form, but when you’ve worked through the ‘What’ and the ‘Why’ you may decide this isn’t feasible at this stage. You can then reconsider the approach to ensure that the process of providing support is not delayed unnecessarily.

### Taking reasonable steps

This approach to information sharing follows how real-life situations unfold. We rarely have all the relevant information at the first point of contact.

It is important to remember that people who need our help most often struggle with organisational policies and procedures. They may not know who to contact. Some find it hard to fill in forms or provide documents. Others cannot easily explain their situation. We should not refuse to act. Instead, we take reasonable first steps based on what we know and adjust our actions as we learn more.

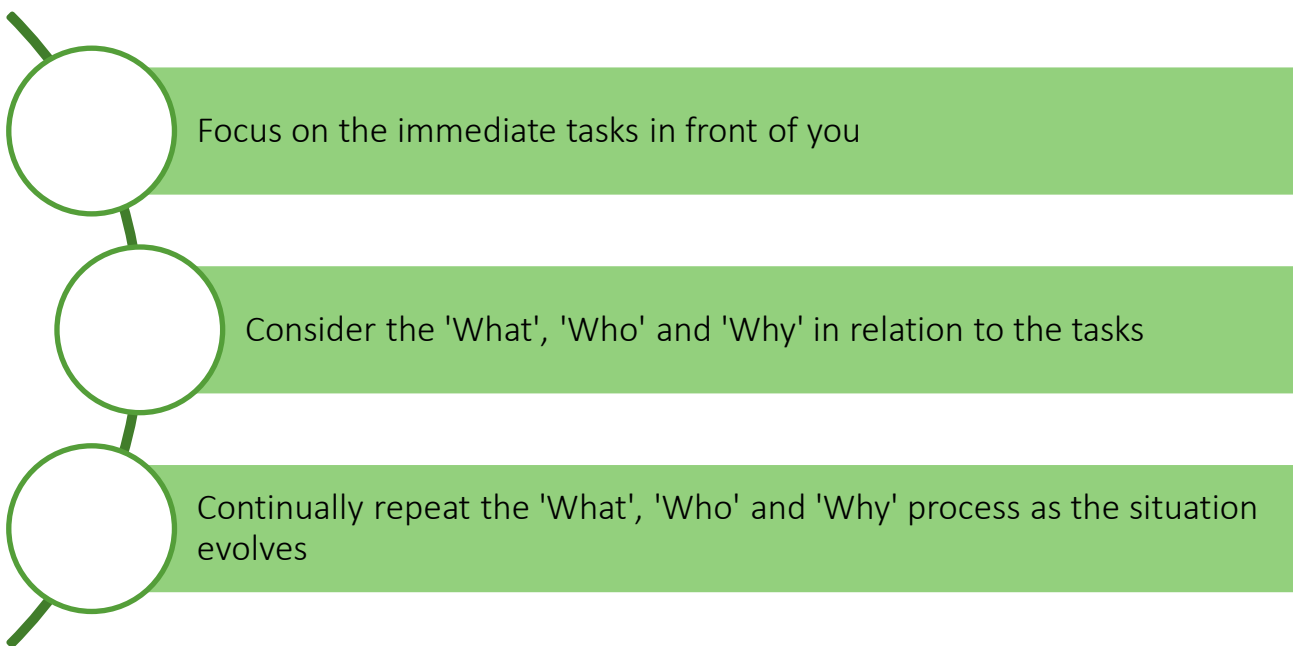
**Example.** *An individual was evicted from temporary accommodation. This information was not shared with other agencies supporting that person who were working with him around his health needs. As a result, the individual could not be located by services and did not attend vital health appointments. He later passed away due to health complications that were exacerbated by lack of intervention. Sharing the basic information of the eviction with other agencies would have helped them to have a clearer picture of the risks around the individual’s well-being.*

### The Legal Framework (Data Protection, Duty of Confidentiality)

The law governing how we use information doesn’t explicitly state whether sharing is right or wrong in any particular case. It requires you to make sure that it has been thought through and a reasonable decision has been made, based on your role and the responsibilities of the organisation you are acting for.

This is an important message because people often lack the confidence to share information due to fearing that they may get into trouble for getting it wrong.

The way to get it right is as follows:



**For example**, you may start with a contact from a community member that the individual in question trusts or has chosen to approach with their problem or issue. Given the 'What' and the 'Why', accepting that information and acting upon it may be entirely the correct approach to start the process of getting them the support they need. You may exercise a degree of caution on what information you provide back to them, but that doesn't stop you from acting on the information provided, such as clarifying how we should connect with the person in their best interests.

**Example.** *A colleague from the DWP reached out to our team to see if the Changing Futures team were working with a vulnerable individual or knew of any other services that were in contact with them. They were looking to avoid closing his benefits claim and seeking to help him provide the necessary documents to continue receiving his payments. Changing Futures were aware that this individual had a named social worker who was in regular contact with the person and was able to link the DWP and social worker together to support.*

As things develop, you may reach a stage where the next level of activity does need some direct involvement with the individual. That doesn't mean you've done anything wrong by not involving them previously if your initial actions are part of your role and the work of the organisation you are acting for. You've taken a considered approach in deciding what was reasonable and evolved the information sharing to reflect what's appropriate for the next stage.

### Acting reasonably with the best interests of the person in mind

The rules aren't just there for the sake of it. They're meant to help organisations handle people's information safely, keeping in mind what the person expects and what's best for them. Always put the person at the centre of your thoughts and make sure we're not making things harder for those who really need our help.

This is illustrated perfectly in the Caldicott Principles<sup>1</sup>. These were established in 1997 as part of national guidelines for handling confidential information appropriately - and have formed the bedrock of good information sharing within health and social care ever since. When the Principles were revised in 2013, one of the most important changes was to introduce a new principle:

**Principle 7:** *The duty to share information for individual care is as important as the duty to protect patient confidentiality.*

*Health and social care professionals should have the confidence to share confidential information in the best interests of patients and service users within the framework set out by these principles.*

*They should be supported by the policies of their employers, regulators and professional bodies.*

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<sup>1</sup> You can read more about the [Eight Caldicott Principles](#) here

The national review determined that the principles needed to include an explicit acknowledgement of the importance of sharing information.

Too often it was found that, unless a request neatly fitted into a pre-existing process or format, people defaulted to an approach in which “If I say ‘no’ then I can’t be wrong”. The problem with this approach is that a decision not to share information, or not to act on information that has been shared, can be hugely detrimental to the person whose rights you are aiming to protect.

Whilst the Caldicott Principles specifically relate to health and social care information, they are a good framework for the sharing of any types of information about people.

**Example:** *I was notified that an individual had been admitted to hospital and would be discharged in 2 days’ time. The person was residing in temporary accommodation provided by the Local Authority, and there was a risk of that accommodation being withdrawn as he had not stayed there for the previous 2 nights. I was able to confidently inform the Local Authority that the person was in hospital and the date of their planned discharge. This meant the temporary accommodation was kept open for him, so he had somewhere to go when he came out of hospital.*

## Remember

What? Who?  
Why?

Act on the current  
info

Review at every  
stage

Seek advice if  
needed

## To find out more about Changing Futures

You can e-mail the team at [changingfutures@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:changingfutures@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or visit our [web page](#)

## Other Information Sharing Resources

Information Commissioner’s Office guidance on data sharing: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-sharing/>

UK Caldicott Guardian Council: <https://www.ukcgc.uk/information-sharing-and-disclosure>

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE): <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/practice/sharing-information/>