Oldham Safeguarding Partnership

Briefing Paper: Information Sharing Duty 2026

Date	30th September 2026
For:	Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies
Author:	Jayne Haigh on behalf of OSCP
Purpose:	To inform partners of the new statutory Information Sharing Duty and local implications for practice.

1. Background

The Information Sharing to Safeguard Children and Young People Statutory Guidance came into force on 30th September 2026, introducing a new Information Sharing Duty under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004. The duty aims to strengthen multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and provide greater clarity regarding when information should be shared to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

2. Why This Matters

Effective safeguarding relies on professionals sharing relevant information in a timely and proportionate way. Reviews of serious incidents have repeatedly identified missed opportunities where information held by one agency was not shared with another, resulting in an incomplete understanding of a child's circumstances.

The new duty seeks to remove uncertainty and strengthen partnership practice through a clearer expectation that relevant information should be shared where this may assist safeguarding activity.

3. Key Changes

New Statutory Duty

Relevant agencies are required to share information they consider relevant to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of a child where sharing may support another agency's safeguarding responsibilities.

Data Protection Is Not a Barrier

The guidance reinforces that UK GDPR and Data Protection legislation should not be viewed as preventing information sharing where safeguarding concerns exist.

Consent Clarified

Consent may be appropriate in some circumstances, but it is not always required before sharing information for safeguarding purposes.

Whole Picture Approach

Partners should consider whether information they hold could contribute to a fuller understanding of a child's circumstances, risks and protective factors.

Information Sharing Across Boundaries

The guidance reinforces the need for effective information sharing between agencies, services, geographical areas and during periods of transition.

4. Expectations of Partner Agencies

Partners are asked to:

✓ Review local information-sharing policies and procedures.

✓ Review Data Sharing Agreements and ensure alignment with statutory guidance.

✓ Ensure staff understand the new duty and feel confident in making informed information-sharing decisions.

✓ Promote a culture where safeguarding information is shared appropriately, lawfully and without unnecessary delay.

✓ Consider any workforce development or training requirements within their organisation.

5. Local Partnership Response

The Oldham Safeguarding Partnership will:

- Review existing information-sharing arrangements.
- Consider alignment with the Department for Education Tier 1 and Tier 2 Data Sharing Agreement templates.
- Update local guidance where required.
- Promote awareness through partnership communications and training.
- Monitor implementation through existing governance arrangements.

Key Message for partners.

The question for practitioners should not be "Can I share this information?" but rather "Could this information help another professional safeguard this child?"

The new Information Sharing Duty strengthens our collective responsibility to share relevant information promptly and appropriately in order to safeguard children and improve outcomes.