



SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

WITH DR SANDRA WISEMAN

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What schools need to know: New Information Sharing Duty.

The Department for Education has published new statutory guidance on information sharing to safeguard children and young people, ahead of a **new legal duty coming into force on 30th September 2026**.

The new Information Sharing Duty, under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004, is intended to give practitioners greater clarity and confidence about when safeguarding information should be shared.

Why has the guidance changed?

Effective information sharing is fundamental to safeguarding children. Schools may hold one piece of information while health, police, social care or another service holds another. It is often only when this information is brought together that the full picture of a child's circumstances, needs and potential risks becomes clear.

The new duty is designed to reduce uncertainty about whether information can be shared, particularly where concerns relate to emerging needs, early support or a child's welfare, rather than an immediate risk of significant harm.

Importantly, a child does not have to meet a particular statutory threshold before relevant safeguarding information can be shared.

What does the new duty mean?

From **30th September 2026**, where the Information Sharing Duty applies, relevant organisations must share information when they consider that:

- they hold information relevant to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of a child; and
- sharing that information may help another relevant organisation to assess need or risk, make a decision, provide support or take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare

The duty can apply whether an organisation identifies relevant information itself or receives a request for information from another relevant organisation.

Safeguarding and promoting welfare is broader than responding to significant harm. It includes identifying needs early, preventing concerns from escalating and supporting children's welfare.

Do we need parental consent?

One of the most important messages for schools is that lack of consent should not, by itself, prevent appropriate safeguarding information sharing where the new statutory duty applies.

The guidance makes clear that relevant information may need to be shared even where a child or parent has not consented.

However, this does not mean that families should automatically be excluded from the process. Good safeguarding practice remains based on openness and transparency. Where it is appropriate and safe to do so, children and families should understand what information is being shared, with whom and why.

What about data protection?

Data protection legislation should not be viewed as a barrier to appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

Schools must still handle personal information lawfully, securely and proportionately, but concerns about data protection should not ordinarily result in information being withheld where sharing is necessary under the safeguarding information-sharing duty.

If staff are unsure, they should seek advice promptly from the DSL, senior leader or Data Protection Officer, rather than simply deciding not to share.

Is there ever a reason not to share?

Yes, but the guidance describes these circumstances as extremely limited. Information does not have to be shared under the duty where professional judgement determines that sharing it would be more detrimental to the child than not sharing it.

For example, there may be circumstances where sharing particular information could place a child at immediate risk of harm or seriously interfere with an investigation.

The guidance is clear, however, that parental objection, lack of consent, fear of a complaint, practitioner discomfort or data protection concerns alone are not sufficient reasons to withhold information where the statutory duty applies.

Where sharing particular details could create a risk, practitioners should consider whether that risk can be reduced by limiting or carefully managing what is shared.

Think beyond the individual incident

Schools should consider the whole picture.

Relevant information can include contextual, historical, partial and pattern-based information. Something that appears relatively insignificant when considered alone may become important when combined with information held by another agency.

The duty can also apply to relevant information about other people connected to a child, including adults or other children, where that information is relevant to the child's safety or welfare.

Practitioners should therefore remain professionally curious and consider whether the information they hold could help another service better understand a child's circumstances.

What should schools do now?

Ahead of **30th September 2026**, DSLs and senior leaders should review their school's information-sharing arrangements and ensure that staff understand the new expectations. In particular, schools should:

- brief DSLs and relevant staff on the new statutory duty;
- review safeguarding and information-sharing procedures;
- ensure staff understand that they do not need to wait for concerns to reach a particular statutory threshold before relevant information can be shared;
- reinforce expectations around accurate and timely safeguarding records;
- ensure decisions about sharing, or exceptionally not sharing, information are clearly recorded, including the rationale;
- review local multi-agency arrangements and information-sharing protocols; and
- ensure staff know who to speak to if they are uncertain about sharing information.

Ask yourself:

"Could the information I hold help another professional assess need or risk, make a decision, provide support or take action to safeguard or promote this child's welfare?"

If the answer may be yes, speak to your DSL and consider whether the information needs to be shared. Effective safeguarding depends on professionals joining together the different pieces of a child's story. Information that appears small in isolation can become significant when it forms part of a wider picture. **The new Information Sharing Duty comes into force on 30th September 2026.**

Link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-sharing-to-safeguard-children-and-young-people>

What do schools need to know? Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings

The Department for Education has updated its safeguarding guidance for out-of-school settings, including after-school and holiday clubs, private tutors, sports and activity clubs, supplementary schools and community or religious settings.

Although the guidance is aimed primarily at providers, there are important implications for schools, particularly when recommending providers, allowing external organisations to use school premises or responding to concerns about activities children attend outside school.

What should schools be aware of?

The guidance reinforces that out-of-school providers should have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place, including:

- an effective safeguarding and child protection policy
- a suitably trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- appropriate recruitment and pre-employment checks, including DBS checks where eligible
- clear procedures for responding to concerns about children, staff and volunteers
- appropriate safeguarding training, including online safety
- clear arrangements for health and safety, complaints and whistleblowing
- knowledge of local referral routes to children's social care and the LADO

Why does this matter for schools?

Schools should remember that safeguarding responsibilities do not end at the school gate. Where an external organisation uses school premises, schools should be clear about the provider's safeguarding arrangements and ensure appropriate procedures are in place. Staff should also remain professionally curious when a child raises concerns about a tutor, coach, club or other activity they attend outside school. Concerns should be recorded and reported to the DSL in the same way as any other safeguarding concern.

Link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice>

Safeguarding Network Meeting - Thursday 22nd October, 3:45pm - 5pm Free

This free Safeguarding Network Meeting will provide an opportunity for Designated Safeguarding Leads, Deputy DSLs and senior leaders to reflect on how the changes are working in practice, discuss emerging issues and ask any questions that have arisen. The session will be practical, interactive and discussion-based, and will include:

-  **KCSIE 2026 - Frequently asked questions**
-  **Interactive safeguarding scenarios based on real-life situations schools are facing**
-  **Discussion around professional curiosity, online safety and AI, Family Help, child-on-child abuse, information sharing, record keeping and decision making**
-  **Sharing safeguarding challenges, ideas and good practice with colleagues from across our schools**

Forthcoming free safeguarding webinars for Autumn term 1 2026

Depression - Tuesday 22nd September

Anxiety - Tuesday 29th September

Self harm and suicidal ideation - Tuesday 6th October

Anti-bullying - Tuesday 13th October

Domestic abuse - Tuesday 20th October

Everything You Need for September 2026 - including the latest KCSIE 2026 updates, 'Further changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026' powerpoint and revised Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy:

<https://www.services4schools.org.uk/cpd-zone/safeguarding/safeguarding-everything-you-need-for-september-2026>

The final version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

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