



Bristol Safeguarding
Children Board

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Information
Sharing,
request for
help and
disputes

2013

Date	Details of change/edit requested
24/08/17	Link broken and out of date that referred to 2008 Info Sharing Guidance. Updated with SWCPP link and National Guidance on Information Sharing. Edited by Natalie Chamberlain.

Information sharing, requests for help and disputes

The information in this section provides guidance on:

- [Information Sharing](#)
- [Request for help](#)
- [Consent](#)
- [Disputes](#)

Information Sharing

Before any information is shared with another agency and in particular a request for help to 'First Response' for early help or Children's Social Care, all professionals should ensure that the decision to share information with another agency is undertaken in accordance with the [Information Sharing Guidance](#) (SWCPP). [Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#) is more detailed government guidance (2015) for practitioners.

Request for help

A request for help, to First Response, can be made in writing, by phone or e-mail. If you are unsure about whether you should make a 'request for help', discuss the matter with your child protection supervisor or a First Response adviser, they will be able to advise you of what action is available to you.

You should also discuss your concerns with the family and the child or young person (where appropriate), unless to do so would place the child or young person at risk of significant harm.

Points to consider before contacting Children's Social Care.

- Be clear what it is you are contacting First Response about!
- If you are contacting First Response to check information or share information this will be recorded as a 'contact' and not a 'referral';
- If you are expressing concerns for a child's welfare and wish for the child's needs to be assessed this is considered a request for a service and will be recorded as a referral, the response may be via early help or a social work team;
- If you are referring a matter for consideration as a 'Child protection' issue it will be recorded as a referral and dealt with according to multi-agency child protection procedures (www.swcpp.org.uk)

Who to make a referral to

- If the child has an allocated social worker, all enquiries or new information should be directed to him/her. If the matter is urgent and the social worker is not available, the referrer should ask to speak to the duty social worker covering the allocated worker's team OR the referral and information assistant;
- All new requests for help should be directed to First Response who will make further enquiries and pass the request to either the relevant early help service or a social work team when a service is considered necessary.
- Where the referral focuses on disability issues, the Disabled Children Service duty social worker should be contacted;
- If there is an immediate concern out of hours then the Emergency Duty Team should be contacted
- If the child is placed for adoption, all enquiries or new information should be directed to the child's allocated social worker and, in their absence, if the matter is urgent, to the duty social worker for their team. The procedure for managing allegations against foster carers and adopters applies in full

Consent

Referrals to First response for either an Early Help service or a social work service should usually be made with the consent of the parents/ carers of the child/children concerned. Or in some circumstances with the consent of the young person where they are considered to be of sufficient understanding (see Fraser & Bichard guidance).

- Parents/Carers should not only be aware of a request for help being made to First Response but the reasons for the request being made. Ideally parents/carers should be provided with a copy of the completed request for help form so that they are fully aware of the information that is being shared with First Response.
- Where a referral is being made to First Response and the parents/carers have not consented to the referral the referrer should seek the advice of their supervisor prior to making the referral.
- Referrers should advise parents that information will be shared with partner agencies to ensure that appropriate action can be taken in response to the request for help.

It remains possible to override the need for parental consent where there is sufficient concern to warrant this and the decision to do so is clearly documented. The need to seek and gain consent for a referral can be dispensed with only in the following circumstances:

- seeking consent or informing the parents of the referral would place the child or young person at significant risk of harm;
- There would be a clear risk of harm to the professional making the referral if they were to approach the parent/carer of the child and seek consent (this decision should always be made in discussion with a Supervisor and in accordance with the Information Sharing Protocol)

First Response will not refuse to accept a request for help if consent has not been sought or gained.

However, any professional making a request for help where this is the case should always take immediate steps to discuss the request for help with the parent/carer of the child or young person in question. The family will be informed that a request for help has been received and the source of the request for help where the request for help is from a professional. It is the responsibility of the referring agency to ensure that they are satisfied that they have taken the necessary steps to gain consent or have made a clear decision that this is not to be done for the reasons outlined above.

Further guidance is available in the South West Child Protection Procedures (www.swcpp.org.uk).

Disputes

Disputes between professionals that remain unresolved can seriously impact on the welfare of children and young people. Where there is a disagreement between professionals regarding a response to a referral relating to a child or young person those involved should make efforts to resolve the matter in a professional and open manner. Where this is not possible the attached procedure and monitoring form should be used to ensure that any significant disagreement is resolved in a timely manner which does not impact upon the child or young person's welfare.

The **Escalation Procedure - Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safety of children** outline the procedures to be used in Bristol when there is a dispute between agencies in relation to a referral regarding a child or young person. Also provided is a monitoring form to be used from stage 3 in the procedure to record decisions made and action taken.