



## Department of Health

The Department of Health has published short guidance to help care professionals make good data sharing decisions. The intention is to remind frontline workers that there is a duty to share information between health and care professionals for the purposes of giving people good, safe, seamless care.

This guidance is to make sure that care professionals understand when they should share information and how to do it safely, and where to turn when in doubt. It is about protecting confidentiality whilst making sure people get the best care and do not fall in cracks between different services.

The Department with the IGA Alliance is seeking feedback from frontline staff and others on how the document can be improved to make it even more useful to those making decisions about sharing information to support the care of individuals.

We welcome feedback on the guidance until 31 January 2015.

Question 1: Think about how you make decisions to share information about individual patients or service users with others who are giving care to that person.

Do you understand this document?

**Yes, this document is easily understood.**

Question 2: This document is designed to be used when frontline staff are making decisions about whether to share information about a person with someone else who is giving care to that person.

It reminds staff that they should take into account the person's preferences, the need to share and the obligation of confidentiality in making decisions about what, if anything, to share.

What problems do you have when trying to make decisions about this sort of information sharing?

**In some cases barriers have arisen due to different rules across different teams, agencies and between health and social care. Having guidance that is applicable to all frontline health and care professionals may help with this – although there is a balance to be struck between covering all bases and being so catch all that staff may not feel the guidance applies to them. The distribution and promotion of this guidance to staff may help with this.**

**Good patient centred care involves the appropriate sharing of information between professionals, often in a face to face or team meeting environment. Some professionals require additional reassurance and guidance around the sharing information in electronic format and via IT systems as opposed to in person.**

**An area in which more guidance is needed, and which could be included/sign posted to in the leaflet is around police requests for information sharing.**

Question 3: Thinking about this document, please answer the following questions with 1 being “not at all” and 4 being “completely”

	1	2	3	4
Does this document provide clear and accessible guidance on information sharing?			X	
Does this document explain how to make decisions about sharing information?		X		
Does this document give you help or support to make these decisions?			X	
Does this document make it easier to make these sharing decisions?			X	

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Question 4: How could the document be improved to make it more helpful?

**In general the document is clear and helpful. We appreciate it is intended to be of short, leaflet length but there are some points that would benefit from further detail - for example including information about the safe transfer of data eg secure email. It may also benefit from the inclusion of, or signposting to, examples of sharing across complex boundaries. It could also be more specific in explaining exactly who the guidance is for (the accompanying document states 'all frontline workers').**

**The rules could perhaps be presented as questions or 'tests' rather than 'rules'. Thus when confronted with a decision concerning sharing individual patient information, the professional applies the tests to the situation.**

**The accompanying document makes more reference to patients implied consent – clarity on explicit versus implied consent, and the recording of consent around data sharing should be included in the guidance leaflet.**

Question 5: What suggestions do you have for getting this document used widely?

**The document could be directly disseminated by hospital trusts, although this would not reach primary care, so perhaps distribution via bodies such as the GMC and GNC would be more useful. Emphasis in mandatory information governance training would also make it more likely to be used.**

**We would suggest different formats/increased tailoring may increase the use of the guidance – for example having the leaflet supplemented by a handy credit card sized laminated card that can be carried by all care and health professionals working in an organisation/system. This card would carry the relevant questions/prompts as bullet points, and details of the appropriate senior manager, information governance lead and/or Caldicott guardian.**

Question 6: Do you know of any examples where data sharing is happening successfully?

**It has been suggested that in some cases better information sharing may be happening in older units which are less reliant on electronic records.**

**Our members have also given examples of local joint electronic health records – for example in Bradford the hospital clinical teams have access to SystemOne the GP patient database.**

Question 7: We think that the advice in this leaflet has no impact on work on equality issues or on work to reduce health inequalities. Do you have any comments on this?

**With regards to certain ethnic groups there can be issues with patient’s rights being subsumed into the male members of family. There may be resistance to data sharing in the family even if the (usually female) patient has given consent.**

Question 8: Do you have any other comments?

**No**

Question 9: Do you make decisions about sharing information?

- I make decisions about whether to share people’s personal information as part of my work
- I give advice to those making such decisions
- I am responsible for policies and processes relating to information sharing in my organisation
- None of the above (please specify):

**Our members will include all of the above.**

Question 10: Where do you work?

- Specify organisation: **Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 9 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1JQ.**

Please send this completed form to [iga@nhs.net](mailto:iga@nhs.net)  
The closing date is Friday 31 January 2015.