

North Somerset Adolescent Safety Framework Information Sharing Protocol – Peer Group Mapping

Introduction and scope

Sharing information is vital for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It ensures effective and efficient services are coordinated around the needs of children and young people, their family, and community.

We encourage a culture where information is shared with confidence as part of routine service delivery on community support and agree that:

‘Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.’ (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023)

All information sharing needs to be managed in ways which respect a person’s right to privacy and confidentiality and must be carried out in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Seven Golden rules of information sharing (DFE 2018).

What are Community Stakeholders?

Community Stakeholders are people or organisations who care about and want to see good community relationships in a place where they live or work. They may also be a person, service or organisation who has an agreement with the Council to contribute to the safety and well-being of children and young people in the area in which they live or work.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2001 places: duties on a range of organisations, agencies and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they

contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Community Stakeholders are asked to share information with us through referrals, assessments and planning in neighborhood, and community conferences in the event that there are worries about risk to a family, child, group of children or a location where harm may be happening to young people.

In the event that concerns arise regarding harm or risk of harm, to a child or group of children or a location, Community Stakeholders are required to contact the North Somerset MASH and give as much information as you can. Your information will be passed immediately to a manager who will decide the action needed. You must follow up your telephone call by sending a completed referral form to the MASH within 48 hours. If there are worries about a child or young person in an emergency, the Police should be contacted using the 999 system.

What the Council will do with the information shared

Where there is sufficient information around risk to children and young people, the information provided will contribute to an assessment of the child or family, group of young people or location and support the development of a plan to create safety.

In order to protect your identity, you, your service or organisation will **not** be named to those receiving the intervention as the referrer of concern unless you explicitly consent for this to happen.

Assessments

A Child and Family Assessment

In the event that the information provided relates to an individual child(ren) or a family, an assessment may be carried out by the department. As a community stakeholder or community guardian you, your service or organisation is unlikely to be involved further in the assessment process and will not receive any feedback about the intervention or outcome. This is due to the need to safeguard the confidentiality of children, young people and families who may be experiencing harm.

An Assessment Related to Multiple Young People

In the event that the information provided relates to multiple young people, an assessment may be carried out by the department. As a community stakeholder, given the need to protect young people's rights to confidentiality and dependent on

the connection between any issue and you, your service or organisation, you may not be involved further in the assessment process. Likewise, to protect the confidentiality of those involved, you, your service or organisation will not be given any child or family-level information about any intervention with the group. You may be told on a need-to-know basis, whether or not an intervention will be taking place and how long this will be for. You may also be asked to monitor the impact of the intervention by sharing whether any problematic behaviour continues or whether any new behaviour arises. This information should be shared with the assessor who will review the intervention.

A Location or Neighbourhood Assessment

In the event that the information provided relates to a location, an assessment may be carried out by the department. As a community stakeholder or Community Guardian during the assessment phase, you may be asked to help with tasks including, but not limited to: running a community survey or taking arms-length observations to contribute to information gathering.

At the end of the assessment, should it be concluded that this location is one in which young people are at risk of significant harm, you or a representative of your service or organisation may be invited to a Context Conference to consider the findings of the assessment and to contribute to a plan of intervention with the purpose of reducing harm to children and young people in the area. Any information shared at the Context Conference will be Private and Confidential and must not be disseminated further. You will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement on behalf of your service or organisation and may not be able to take away reports prepared. Any information that is disseminated must be stored in confidential files.

Context Protection Plans will be reviewed until all actions are complete and there is a measurable reduction of harm in the location or neighbourhood.

By attending a Context Conference, you agree to the confidentiality agreement on behalf of yourself, your service or organisation, and to continue to be a Community Stakeholder or Community Guardian and consent to the advice and guidance and terms and conditions herein.

What is Peer Group Mapping?

A peer group is a social group of people with similar social status who share similar interests and are often close in age. In North Somerset, in certain defined circumstances as outlined in this paper we collect, record and share information about the peer group relationships of the young people we work with: this is what is meant by peer group mapping.

Peer relationships are most often a protective factor and a source of support, lessening or managing the risks that a young person may face in adolescence. But for some young people, peer relationships may be a source of risk. For instance, they may be vulnerable to bullying, violence, or sexual or criminal exploitation by their peers. When working to safeguard young people and to promote their welfare, the Council may need to consider the impact of peer group relations, rather than simply looking at the child in the context of their family. Through carrying out peer mapping exercises, practitioners can identify and understand peer group strengths and risks. Peer mapping achieves this by:

- Giving an understanding of the nature, scale and seriousness of the risks posed by or to identified peer groups, individuals and locations.
- Providing a picture of the roles and relationships between individuals, including the amount of influence and control individuals have within a network.
- Supporting the identification of effective safeguarding interventions and other suitable multi-agency opportunities (e.g. group work; disruption; environmental change).
- Focusing awareness on information gaps, and how to inform these by information gathering.
- Providing a foundation for the ongoing support to the peer group/location within a multi-agency partnership context.

A practitioner may decide to map a peer group of young people already known to Children's Social Care (CSC) or a peer group not previously known to the service following notification of a significant event that presents a safeguarding concern to a group of young people.

Information Sharing

Information sharing in relation to peer group mapping may take two forms:

- Within the Council: for instance, between social workers working with different young people that are all part of the same peer group
- Outside of the Council: where information may be shared with or by multi-agency professionals, such as health, education, the police

Personal data that may be used includes, but is not limited to:

- Name, address, age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability (as relevant).
- Details of harmful or high-risk relationships (e.g. gang affiliation, suspected perpetrators of child sexual exploitation).
- Criminal convictions or offences.

- Publicly available social media information, such as posting on the internet.
- Social care history.

Parental Notification

A record will be made on CSC's recording system of young people deemed relevant (Young people connected or involved in the peer group who are at risk of harm or who present a risk of harm to others) on a peer group map. Relevant young people and their parents will be notified of the personal data used for peer group mapping and any identified risks to that young person unless:

- there is good reason to do otherwise: for instance, there would be a risk to their immediate safety or the safety of other young people if the information were shared with their parents.
- where to do so will be impossible or would involve disproportionate effort.
- where to do so would render impossible or seriously impair the objectives of the plan to safeguard.

Information regarding young people appearing on the peer group map will only be shared with parents of other children that appear on the map *if* consent is given *and* it is safe and appropriate to do so for the purposes of a peer group intervention.

Lawful basis for processing information in peer group mapping

CSC may map peer groups insofar as it supports its statutory function to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and as detailed in The Children Act 1989, The Children Act 2004 and as per any applicable national frameworks as to how such duties are to be carried out, such as Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

Seeking the consent of children, young people or others to process their information for the purposes of peer group mapping may alert them, thereby contributing to the identified risk(s) or diminishing CSC's ability to safeguard.

The lawful basis on which CSC may process information regarding peer groups without consent is Article 6 (1) (e) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):

processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller.

This lawful basis applies to the processing of information that supports the aforementioned statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

Information used in peer group mapping may constitute special category data, defined in Article 9 of GDPR as *'personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation...'*

Special category data processed for peer group mapping will only be processed without the subject's consent where it is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest as per Article 9 (2) (g) of GDPR and in accordance with provisions in the Data Protection Act 2018 Schedule 1, Part 2 (6) (1) (b) and the Data Protection Act 2018 Schedule 1, Part 2 (18):

Statutory etc. and government purposes

6(1) This condition is met if the processing—

(b) is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest.

Safeguarding of children and of individuals at risk

18(1) This condition is met if—

(a) the processing is necessary for the purposes of—

(i) protecting an individual from neglect or physical, mental or emotional harm, or

(ii) protecting the physical, mental or emotional well-being of an individual,

(b) the individual is—

(i) aged under 18, or

(ii) aged 18 or over and at risk,

(c) the processing is carried out without the consent of the data subject for one of the reasons listed in sub-paragraph (2), and

(d) the processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest.

(2) The reasons mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)(c) are—

(a) in the circumstances, consent to the processing cannot be given by the data subject;

(b) in the circumstances, the controller cannot reasonably be expected to obtain the consent of the data subject to the processing;

(c) the processing must be carried out without the consent of the data subject because obtaining the consent of the data subject would prejudice the provision of the protection mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)(a).

(3) For the purposes of this paragraph, an individual aged 18 or over is “at risk” if the controller has reasonable cause to suspect that the individual—

(a) has needs for care and support,

(b) is experiencing, or at risk of, neglect or physical, mental or emotional harm, and

(c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the neglect or harm or the risk of it.

(4) In sub-paragraph (1)(a), the reference to the protection of an individual or of the well-being of an individual includes both protection relating to a particular individual and protection relating to a type of individual.

All information sharing needs to be managed in ways which respect a person’s right to privacy and confidentiality and must be carried out in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Seven Golden rules of information sharing (DFE 2018)