

1.6 Eight Golden Rules for Information Sharing

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.

2. If there are concerns that a child may be at risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, then it is your duty to follow the relevant procedures without delay. Seek advice if you are not sure what to do at any stage and ensure that the outcome of the discussion is recorded.

3. Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.

4. Seek advice if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.

5. Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You should go ahead and share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest, or where a child is at risk of significant harm. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.

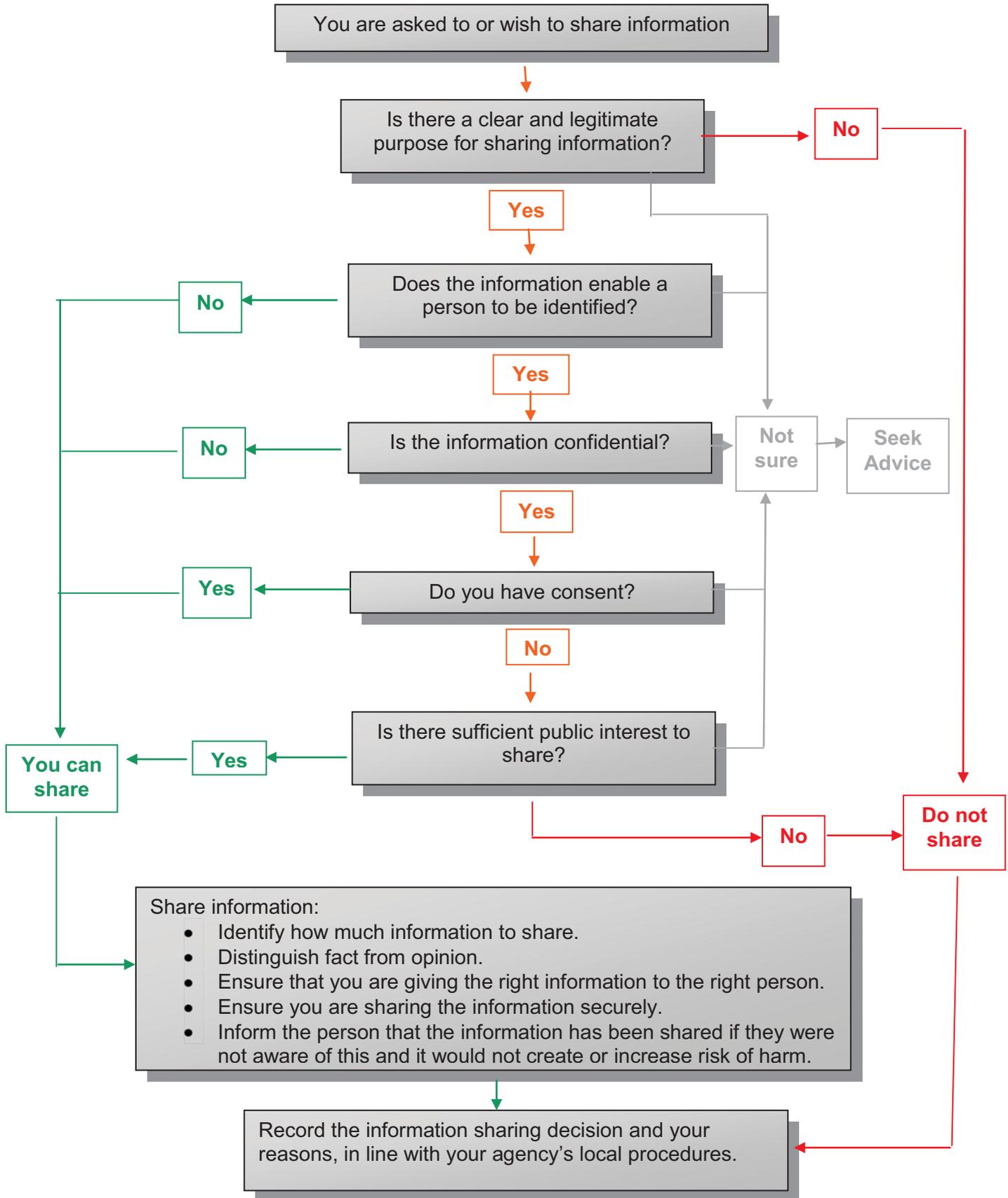
6. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.

7. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.

8. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

Figure 2

Flowchart of Key questions for Information Sharing



If there are concerns that a child may be at risk of significant harm or an adult may be at risk of serious harm, then follow the relevant procedures without delay. Seek advice if you are not sure what to do at any stage and ensure that the outcome of the discussion is recorded.