

Information Sharing – Fact Sheet for Carers

This fact sheet is to let you know what information you can expect to receive about the child when they come into your care, what details you can and can't share about them with different people, and what information birth parents will receive about you.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD IN YOUR CARE

Before a child comes into your care, their case manager will provide information about the child's situation and needs, helping you understand how best to care for them. Throughout the child's stay, you can expect details such as family names, reasons for coming into care, expected duration of care, and relevant documents like the Care Plan.

Information impacting the child's safety, health, cultural background, and contact arrangements with birth family will be shared. Sometimes, when the child first comes to stay with you, some of this information is not yet available. We understand the uncertainty of not having all the answers or, for example, not knowing how long the child will be in your care can be hard for everyone and can make planning for the future difficult and sometimes unsettling. Your case manager is available for questions.

The information shared with you will be relevant to the care and planning needed for the child. Information that does not impact their care will not be shared with you in respect to other people's right to privacy. For example, there may be reports about a parent's personal history that may not be relevant to the care and planning needed for their child, and so this information would not be shared with you.

The child in your care also has a **right to information**. As appropriate to their age, they will also be provided with information about their care arrangement. This includes information about the members of your family, contact arrangements with their birth parents, siblings, or significant others, as well as contact details for their case manager and when they will visit.

INFORMATION YOU CAN SHARE

The child in your care has a right to confidentiality and privacy. This includes how information about them can be used and who it can be shared with.

As their carer, you have an **obligation** to protect the privacy of the child and their family – this includes personal information you know about the child's history.

However, there are situations where it is **okay** for you to share information about the child in your care. This is when it would support and assist the child, like sharing information with their school to help them understand what may be currently happening in the child's life. For example, if after a contact visit the child is upset, you may decide to let the teacher know this to give some context and understanding to how the child is behaving.

The *Children and Young People Act 2008* (the Act) allows this type of information sharing to happen when an individual, such as a carer, is performing a function under the Act and it is in the **best interests** of the child.

As a member of the child's **Declared Care Team** (Care Team for short), you can always share information with others in the team. The purpose of the Care Team is to share information, work collaboratively and share decision-making in a **confidential** manner. The Care Team is typically formed early after the child enters care and is made up of people and services specific to the child's care.

Everyone who receives information about the child in your care becomes an 'information holder' under the Act. All information holders have a **legal responsibility** to protect the information they receive and can only share it when performing a function under the Act.

When thinking about sharing information with others, consider whether it is **necessary** for the child's protection and wellbeing, or to perform your **function** as a carer. If you are not sure who you can share information with, talk to your case manager about this.

INFORMATION YOU CAN NOT SHARE

It is important you do not share the fact the child you are caring for is subject to a Care and Protection Order with anyone outside of the child's Care Team. This includes information about the reasons why you are caring for the child. This can be a tricky situation, as people will realise the child is living with you and are likely to ask questions.

For example, you should **not** tell your family the child is coming to live with you because their parents are drugs users or because they were neglectful. It is **okay** to say you are just helping the family out for a while, or the child is staying with you while their family is getting some help. It is a good idea to have some standard responses to questions ready, such as 'They are just staying with me for a few days', 'I am just helping the family out for a while', 'Sorry that is private'.

Social media is another way many people share information. This is an area you should always discuss with your case manager, and it should be decided on an individual basis. However, your initial position should be to **not** post any photos or comments that could identify the child in your care. Remember, it is a **criminal act** to identify a child as being subject to a Care and Protection Order or in out of home care. This can stigmatise the child and place their safety, and yours, at risk.

As a carer, you have an obligation to protect the privacy of those involved. If you are unsure, or want some help in how to respond to people's questions, contact your carer support worker or your child's case manager for advice.

INFORMATION BIRTH PARENTS KNOW ABOUT YOU

Your privacy is important. Any information provided to the child's birth parents by CYPS or ACT Together is required to be treated by them with the utmost confidence.

If the child you are caring for is on a **Voluntary Care Agreement**, their birth parents will **generally** be given your name, address and phone number.

If the child you are caring for is on a **Care and Protection Order**, it is good practice if information about you is shared to allow the relationship to develop. It is only when there are safety concerns or unknowns that it would be considered appropriate for information not to be shared. If you are a kinship carer, it is possible that the birth parents already know you very well because of your family connection. This is likely to include your contact details and where you live.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

You can talk to your Case Manager or your Carer Support Worker.

ACT Together

02 6110 2200 (BH)

0402 036 254 (AH)

CYPS

02 6207 6956 (BH)

1300 556 729 (AH)

FEEDBACK

Scan here to give feedback to ACT Together

