ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Health Select Commission
2.	Date:	11th July 2013
3.	Title:	Information Sharing
4.	Directorate:	All

5.   Summary

The Health Select Commission has asked for a report on Information Sharing Protocols within Rotherham. There is an Overarching Information Sharing Protocol (OISP) which is a multi agency protocol and is used by many organisations within Rotherham as evidence and compliance to Information Sharing best practice.

This report gives an overview of Information Sharing within Rotherham and how it is supported by the OISP. It is worth stating that processes place the service user at the centre of how their information is processed in accordance of their rights to privacy and confidentiality.

6.   Recommendations

  The Health Select Commission are asked to:
- **Note, for information, the work being done to support Information Sharing Protocols by multi agencies within Rotherham.**

7. Details

What is information sharing?

A service user usually provides information to a single organisation, for example, when filling in personal details on council tax forms or answering questions from a doctor's receptionist. In many cases the information provided won't be passed on to another organisation.

In some cases, though, one organisation may pass information to another organisation, or a number of organisations might get together and share information.

Information is sometimes shared within the same organisation. For example, the local authority may use information supplied on a council tax form to help its other departments to update their records.

Why is information shared?

This is done for a number of reasons. For example:

- a teacher, social worker and health professional share information about a child so the child's needs can be addressed;
- a local authority shares information with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to allow it to work out a pensioner's application for housing benefit;
- a hospital where a service user has had an operation shares information with the GP so that the service user can be looked after correctly after discharge;
- the police share information with a local authority to help counter antisocial behaviour in the area; or
- credit referencing, where lenders consult a credit reference agency to check your financial standing when you apply for credit.

Information sharing will usually take place where providing a service involves a number of different organisations.

Consent and information sharing?

Information sharing can often take place without consent. In many cases where the service user is not asked for permission, the information sharing will be reasonable and expected. However, it should be clear why the information is being shared and who is involved.

If organisations want to share sensitive or confidential information, they are more likely to need consent. For example, if they want to share information about your health.

In some cases information may be shared without the service user even knowing about it. This might be the case where telling an individual about the sharing would be likely to prejudice a criminal investigation, or prevent a vulnerable person receiving proper protection.

Information Sharing within Rotherham

Government policy places a strong emphasis on the need to share information across organisational boundaries in order to ensure effective co-ordination of services, specifically in ensuring that there are integrated services across the locality.

Agencies arranging services to people within Rotherham are continually processing information about them. At times a single agency working with an individual may identify a range of issues that need to be addressed, some of which are outside its scope or expertise. Conversely, more than one agency could become involved with a service user but they are unaware of each other.

These agencies will be gathering the same basic information, undertaking similar assessments, producing and implementing plans of action that are appropriate to the agencies perceived response rather than the whole need of the individual. As a result there is often unnecessary duplication of effort, poor co-ordination and a lack of a coherent approach to the particular issues facing an individual which could be potentially detrimental.

In these circumstances it has been recognised that a multi agency response is the best way of ensuring that service users receive the type and level of support most appropriate to their needs. In order to achieve this it is essential to have in place a framework that will allow the sharing of relevant information between professionals, when it is needed, with a degree of confidence and trust.

The Rotherham Overarching Information Sharing Protocol (OISP)

Rotherham has had an Overarching Information Sharing Protocol in various forms since 2006 (Children and Young People specific). This was updated in 2009 to be relevant across all agencies within Rotherham independent of cohort. This is a multi agency protocol and is used by many organisations within Rotherham as evidence and compliance to Information Sharing best practice.

The OISP is part of a model enabling partner organisations to utilise well established, appropriate and transparent information sharing systems (either manual or electronic). Processes place the service user at the centre of how their information is processed in accordance of their rights to privacy and confidentiality. It is a statement of the principles and assurances that govern information sharing.

Previous versions of the OISP have been well received and widely used within Rotherham to facilitate trust in allowing the sharing of information. The current version of the protocol not only addresses operational information sharing but also reflects the need of organisations to share information at a strategic level in order to:

- Improve the well being and life opportunities through educational, health and social care opportunities
- Protect peoples and communities
- Support people in need
- Reduce crime
- Reduce violence

- Prevent Health inequalities
- Provide seamless provision of children and young people's services
- Enable service users to access universal and specialist services
- Enable staff to meet statutory duties across organisations
- Prevent and detection of crime
- Improve data integrity and information quality
- Investigate complaints
- Manage and plan services
- Commission and contracting services
- Developing inter agency strategies

How the OISP works in Rotherham

The OISP forms part of the wider Rotherham Information Sharing Framework which aims to deliver a planned and structured approach to information sharing at all levels across the partner organisations. .

The OISP identifies a common set of principles under which organisations share information and establishes commonality between the information sharing community. This is supported by individual Service Specific Protocols in which the type of information shared is defined and the purpose for which it is shared is identified. These are detailed information sharing agreements between individual agencies within the information sharing community at an operational level.

Law

Information sharing must be undertaken in a manner that is in accordance with the Data Protection Act, Human Rights Act, common law duty of confidentiality and any other specific statute that authorises or restricts disclosure

The OISP must NOT be seen as a legal document that will allow
Information to be shared between organisations. Indeed the protocol merely documents best practice and a shared understanding of responsibilities

The presence or absence of the OISP must never be used as a reason for or against sharing information. The OISP merely shows agreed best practice of how, when, where and why to share information

8.   Finance
None – Protocol is already being used

9.   Risk and Uncertainties
None – Protocol is already being used

10.   Policy and Performance Agenda Implications
More effective strategic multi agency information sharing can only contribute to the Policy and Performance agenda

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