

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO HOW WE HANDLE YOUR PERSONAL DATA

Are you aware that personal information that you share with your GP or other healthcare professionals, is about to be extracted and stored on a computer outside of the control of this Practice? Or that the Practice will have no say over who has access to that information?

There are going to be changes in how we can protect the confidential and personal information in your medical records. These changes make it a legal obligation for us to share your information.

The belief is that sharing data can help to show how well different services are performing; help researchers with studies to identify patterns in diseases and responses to treatment; and also enable providers to improve patient care by planning more effective services.

The purpose of this leaflet

We feel it is vital that you as out patient are aware of these changes. This leaflet aims to help you understand what currently happens to your medical information, and how that information might be used outside of your direct care.

Most patients come to their GP Practice when they have something wrong with them. Problems discussed are of a personal nature, and patients expect that any information they share will remain confidential. Doctor-Patient confidentiality is a central relationship of trust, and without it, you as a patient may feel unable to disclose information of a personal nature. However, sharing your information is crucial for us to be able to provide you with the best possible healthcare.

What we record at our Practice

Healthcare professionals in our Practice record information about the care we provide. This can include:

- Demographics, e.g. your address, telephone number, e-mail, date of birth, gender, etc.
- What you tell us during consultations about your physical and mental health, and social circumstances.
- Diagnoses, medical investigations you may have had, treatments, referrals and family background.
- Social information such as housing status, alcohol and smoking data
- Information from third parties, e.g. hospital letters, A&E attendances, relatives, carers, insurance companies, solicitors.

What we already share about you

We share different types of information about our patients. These include:

- Personal information about you and your illness when needed for your direct care, e.g. for referrals to hospital Consultants, District Nurses, Health Visitors, Midwives, Counsellors, the Summary Care Record.
- Information needed for Public Health purposes such as childhood immunisation, cervical smear and retinal screening programmes.

- With your explicit consent: personal information to other organisations outside the NHS such as insurance companies or benefits agencies.
- Limited information about you, if relevant, to protect you and others, e.g. to Social Services or child protection investigations.
- Under certain Acts of Parliament to protect you and others, e.g. court orders.
- Summary information which is anonymised (cannot identify you) for the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QoF), medical research and clinical audit.

It is also important to understand that currently a limited amount of patient information or data is used, mostly at a local level, to help design health services or undertake clinical audits. Some information is used at a national level. Data from lots of individual patients helps the NHS to build a picture of what is happening to the nation's health as a whole. The majority of this information is anonymised before it leaves the healthcare professionals. In other words, no-one can identify who the information relates to.

How we protect your personal information

Currently, your GP is responsible for protecting your information. To do this they have to comply with the Data Protection Act 1988 (DPA). As part of the DPA, all healthcare professionals are only allowed to share information on a 'need-to-know' basis. For further information on the DPA, please follow this link: (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>)

Information is physically stored on secure servers which are protected by firewalls. Access to the information is by strong, authenticated password. The number of people who have access to your information is limited to members of the Practice team. In a few instances, some pre-agreed data is shared with other healthcare professionals such as District Nurses, but only on a 'need-to-know' basis.

So, what is changing?

Under the Health & Social Care Act 2012, the Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) on behalf of NHS England (the organisation responsible for commissioning health services across the country) will be able to extract personal and identifiable information about all patients in England.

The programme, called **care.data**, is administered by the HSCIC using software and services provided by a private sector company. Once your identifiable information has been taken from different health organisations (GP Practices, hospitals, mental health trusts), it will then be linked together to produce a complete record about you. This information will be stored on national secure servers and will be managed by HSCIC.

Although access to information will be strictly controlled, the HSCIC is planning to share this data with other organisations, both NHS and private. The HSCIC will decide what data to share, and who to share it with. Your GP will not be able to object to this information being released to the HSCIC, and will no longer be able to protect your information under the Data Protection Act. This means that, where the HSCIC is concerned, the Health & Social Care act *overrides* the DPA regarding disclosure of personal data.

What you need to do

- If you are happy for NHS England to enable the HSCIC to extract, store, manage and use your personal information, then you need to do nothing. The information will be taken automatically from your GP's computer system.
- If you DO NOT want the HSCIC to extract your identifiable and personal information, then you MUST inform your GP Practice, who can then block the uploading.
- If you are happy for your information to be extracted and used by the HSCIC for anonymised reports and research, but NOT happy for it to be shared with other agencies or companies, you can ask your GP practice to add a code to your record. This will alert the HSCIC not to use your information in this way. This choice will also prevent the HSCIC from sharing further any data they have gathered about you from hospitals or other sources.

It is important to note that your access to health care, and the care that you receive will not be affected by whichever choice you make.

Further Information

If you wish to enquire further, more information about the HSCIC and care.data can be found on the internet. Visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/caredata.
The HSCIC has a dedicated patient information line on 0300 456 3531.