

You and Your Medical Records

This leaflet is to let you know:

- What information the NHS collects about you
- How your records are used
- How we keep information secure and confidential
- Who it is shared with, and why
- How you can request to see your records
- Contacts for further information

What Information is collected

Your GP and other health care professionals caring for you (such as dentists, opticians and health visitors) may hold medical records about your health and medical history and any treatment you receive from the NHS.

These records give the vital information they need to provide you with the best possible care and treatment. Records may be written down on paper (manual records), or held on a computer (electronic records)*. The records may include

- Your name, address and date of birth
- Your medical history
- Any assessments, care plans and reviews
- Details that affect the development of a care plan (such as benefits or housing details)
- Relevant information from other health professionals, relatives, or those who care for you and know you well.

The main health record is kept by your GP who uses it to record every consultation, medical/social information received from you and others involved in your care and any medication prescribed for you.

Your GP record moves with you whenever you change your GP.

*In future, each patient will have an electronic care record which will replace existing record systems.

How your records are used

Your records are used to guide and administer the care you receive to ensure that:

- Any doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional involved in your care has accurate and up-to-date information to assess your health requirements and plan the care you need
- You receive the most appropriate type and quality of care by allowing the NHS to monitor the treatment you receive through clinical audits
- Your concerns can be properly investigated if you need to complain.

When you consent to treatment, any necessary relevant information will be shared with the healthcare professional providing you with that treatment. Doctors/ healthcare professionals cannot provide safe treatment or continuity of care without being informed about your condition and medical history. If you do not wish your medical information to be shared this may prevent or adversely affect any treatment given.

There may be circumstances where NHS doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals are involved in training and your medical records and treatment may be under scrutiny for this purpose. You will be asked if you have any objections to this before any medical records or your treatment are considered.

It is essential your records are up-to-date. If any of your personal details, such as your name and address, change please let the appropriate NHS organisations know.

How we keep information secure and confidential

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep patient and staff information confidential. Unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. when the health and safety of others is at risk, we will not disclose your information to third parties without your consent. In certain circumstances we are required by law to report information to the appropriate authorities. This information is only provided after formal authority is given by a qualified health professional.

If you receive care from other agencies, such as Social Services, we may need to share some information with them so we can all work together for your benefit. Only appropriate information required for that care would be shared. Anyone who receives such information is also under a legal duty of confidentiality.

Why we share information

- To provide you with the best possible and safest care,
- To look after the health of the general public eg. when dealing with an infectious disease, such as meningitis, that may endanger others.
- To pay your GP, hospital and others for the care they provide.
- To audit NHS accounts and services (anonymised information is used).
- To investigate complaints, legal claims or untoward incidents.
- To review current services and plan to meet patient needs in the future.
- To teach and train health care professionals (with your consent).
- To conduct health research and development (with your consent).

There are strict controls to ensure individual patients cannot be identified when information is used for statistical research.

How you can request to see your own records

You can make an informal request to see your medical records by asking a member of staff involved in your care to see the record they have written about you.

Alternatively, under the Data Protection Act 1998, you have the right to formally request to see your full record. You should apply directly to your GP, dental surgery, optician or the relevant hospital for these records. If you are not registered with a GP and you wish to apply for your main health record, an application form is available from the Patient Services Manager (see over leaf).

You will be sent a form to complete and return with the fee (to cover administrative costs this is normally £10 for electronic records or up to £50 for manual records or a combination of manual and electronic records). You should be given access to your records within 21 days, though in exceptional circumstances this may take up to the 40 day limit under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Should your doctor or other health care professional decide that seeing your medical records may cause serious harm to your physical or mental health (or might identify someone else who has not agreed to that information being revealed) you may only be shown part of your medical records.

If you think this has happened to you, you have the right to appeal against any withholding of information.

Contacts for more information

For general advice on GP registration, allocation and accessing your health record contact:

Patient Services Department

Primary Care Support Services (PCSS)
Brooklands House, Marlborough Road,
Lancing Business Park,
Lancing,
West Sussex, BN15 8AF
Tel.: 01903 756899
Email: pcss.eastpcssmail@nhs.net

For information on services, advice and support:

Contact your PCT's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Telephone: 0300 1000 891
Email: esdw-pct.PALS@nhs.net
hr-pct.PALS@nhs.net

**If you have difficulty reading this document, we can help by providing a translation, audio tape, large print, Braille or CD.
Contact PALS at your PCT.**

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