

# Looking after your confidential personal information



**This booklet explains why information is collected about you and the ways in which it may be used**

## Why we keep records about you

The health and social care professionals caring for you, keep records about your health and any treatment and care you receive from the NHS. The records are vital in helping to ensure that you receive the best possible care.

They may be written down (manual records) or held on a computer and may include:

- Basic details about you, such as address, telephone number and next of kin
- Contacts we have had with you, such as clinic or home visits
- Notes and reports about your health, treatments and care, such as doctor's notes and medication reports
- Results of investigations, such as X-rays and laboratory tests
- Relevant information from other health professionals, relatives or those people who care for you and who know you well

## How your records are used to help you

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

- Ensure your doctor, nurse or other healthcare staff involved in your care has accurate and up-to-date information to assess your health and decide what care you need
- Ensure information is available should you need to see another health or social care worker
- Ensure there is a sound basis for providing the type and quality of care you have received
- Enable your concerns to be properly examined if you wish to complain about any aspect of your care or our services

## How your records are used to help us

**Your information may also be used to help us:**

- Review the care we provide to ensure it is of the highest standard to you
- Make sure our services can meet patient needs in the future
- Investigate complaints, legal claims or untoward incidents by patients or staff
- Teach and train health and social care staff
- Conduct health and social care research and development
- Prepare statistics on performance

When we use your information for statistical purposes every care is taken to ensure that individual patients cannot be identified.

Statistical information may also be passed to organisations with a valid interest, including universities, community safety units and research institutions.

Personally identifiable information may be used for essential NHS and social care purposes. These may include research and auditing services. This will only be done with your prior consent unless the law requires information to be passed on to improve public health.



## How we keep your records confidential

**Everyone working for the NHS and Social Services has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential.**

You may be receiving care from several organisations including the NHS, Social Services and voluntary organisations. We may need to share some information about you so we can all work together for your benefit.

We will only ever use or pass on information about you if professionals involved in your care have a genuine need for it.

We will not disclose your information to organisations such as the police without your permission. However, if there are exceptional circumstances, such as when the health or safety of others is at risk or when the law requires it, we are required to pass information on.

**Everyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.**

We are required by law to report certain information to the appropriate authorities. This is only provided after formal permission has been given by a qualified health professional.

**Occasions when we must pass on information include:**

- Where we encounter a disease which may endanger the safety of others, such as meningitis or measles.
- Where a formal court order has been issued.
- Prevention and detection of crime.

**Our guiding principle is that we hold your records in strictest confidence.**



## Which organisations do we share information with?

The main organisations with which we may share information are:

- Commissioning Support Unit
- Trust Development Authority
- Clinical Commissioning Groups and General Practitioners
- Ambulance Services
- Out of Hours Services.

Subject to strict agreements describing how it will be used, your information may also be shared with:

- Other NHS agencies such as dentists and ophthalmic services, etc.
- Social Services
- Education Services
- Local Authorities
- Voluntary Sector Providers
- Private Sector Providers.

## How we ensure your information is accurate

We also have a duty to ensure your information is accurate and up to date to make certain we have the correct contact and treatment details about you.

To do this we routinely ask you if your personal information is recorded correctly and update it accordingly.



## How you can get access to your own health and social care records

The Data Protection Act 1998 allows you to find out what information is held about you on computer and in manual records. This is known as “right of subject access”.

It applies to your health and social care records. If you want to see them you can make a written request to the organisations where you are being, or have been, treated.

You are entitled to view your records and if you wish, receive a copy but you should note that a charge will usually be made.

In rare circumstances your right to see some details in your health records may be limited in your own interest or for other reasons. A decision not to disclose some details would be taken by clinical staff responsible for your care.

Your written request should include:

- Your full name
- A clear description of what information you would like, for example, if you require information related to a hospital stay it may be useful to provide the dates of your stay.
- Your address and any other information that may prove useful in locating your information, such as your date of birth.
- A forwarding address for correspondence.

Alternatively, an application form is available from the contact below.

Send your request to:

**Access to Health Records  
Administrator  
North Staffordshire Combined  
Healthcare NHS Trust  
Lawton House  
Bellringer Road  
Trentham  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST4 8HH**

## Further information

Speak to your health or social care staff if you wish to know more about how we use your information.

You can also contact the Data Protection Officer of the organisation where you are being treated or cared for, such as the Social Services, hospital, clinic or GP surgery.



To find out more about the NHS Care Records Service please visit:

[www.hscic.gov.uk](http://www.hscic.gov.uk)

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Alternatively, you can contact PALS. The PALS team is there to help you, whether it is with a question, an information request or a problem you are experiencing when using the NHS.

You can contact PALS in local NHS Trusts on the following phone numbers:

**North Staffordshire  
Combined Healthcare  
PALS 0800 389 9676**

**NHS North Staffordshire &  
Stoke-on-Trent Partnership  
PALS 0800 783 2865**

**Commissioning Support  
Services  
PALS 0800 030 4563**

**University Hospitals  
of North Midlands PALS  
01782 676455 or 676450**

# Looking after your confidential personal information



**This publication is available in other formats**

The information in this booklet can be made available to you in another language, large print, Braille or on audio cassette tape. Contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **free phone 0800 389 9676**.

**North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust  
Harplands Hospital  
Hilton Road, Harfields,  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST4 6TH**

**[www.combined.nhs.uk](http://www.combined.nhs.uk)**

**E-mail: [PatientExperienceTeam@northstaffs.nhs.uk](mailto:PatientExperienceTeam@northstaffs.nhs.uk)**

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