Other ways that your records may be used

Your local NHS services may also use the information in your health record to monitor and improve local health services. In these cases the information used doesn't identify you and will help to:

- Ensure that the healthcare available locally meets the needs of patients;
- Look at how the quality of care can be improved for patients;
- Train and educate staff to ensure they are providing the most up-to-date and effective care and treatment.

In exceptional circumstances it may also be necessary to use limited information from your health record to confirm that the right treatment has been charged for by the healthcare provider. In these cases the minimum information will be held and will be destroyed as soon as the correct information is confirmed.

How you can help your GP practice to keep your health record up-to-date

- Let us know if you change your address or your name;
- Keep a note of your unique NHS number;
- Tell us if any information in your record is incorrect.

We hope that you will be happy for the information in your health record to be shared when we believe it is right to do so, but if you are not, then please let your GP practice know.

How you can access your health record

To see a copy of your health record, please contact your GP practice in writing.

Privacy and confidentiality

For more information about your rights under the Data Protection Act, contact:

Information Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House, Cheshire SK9 5AF
08456 30 60 60
www.ico.gov.uk

Further information

NHS West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
Building 4, Spencer Close, St Margaret's Hospital, The Plain, Epping, Essex CM16 6TN

@nhswestessex / 01992 566140 / weccg.comms@nhs.net

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NHS
West Essex
Clinical Commissioning Group

Your health records

How the local NHS uses and protects the information held about you

Find out more at **www.westessexccg.nhs.uk**

Your health record

Every time you see your GP or a clinician in either the community or a hospital they must keep a record of the care you received. Your health record includes information about your health, appointments you have had, test results and treatment you have received.

Examples of the types of information on your record:

- Your name, address, date of birth, sex, ethnicity, NHS number and next of kin;
- The treatment and care you have received or are receiving;
- Observations, diagnoses and plans for future care.

Your health record is used to make sure that decisions about your care and treatment are based on accurate, up-to-date information about your health.

Protecting your privacy

Your health records are confidential and it is very important that the local NHS protects your privacy. Your privacy is protected by law.

Everyone who works for the NHS has a legal duty to maintain the highest level of confidentiality. There are strict rules about keeping records, on a computer as well as on paper, so that they remain secure. Only people who are involved in your care or treatment are able to get access to your records and only when they have a justifiable reason to do so.

Sharing your health record

To make sure you receive the most appropriate care and treatment it may be necessary to share the information in your health records with other health professionals and organisations that are involved in your care.

Computer records are now set up in such a way that health professionals from one organisation may be able to look at your records from another – for example, the hospital may be able to look at your GP record. They must ask your permission before they do this and you have the right to refuse.

As well as sharing records between parts of the NHS and local NHS services it may be necessary for records sharing to extend to social care organisations who give care to many people. This is to ensure you get the most appropriate treatment and are cared for in a more joined-up way.

In all circumstances where we are sharing information about you for your treatment or care, whether within the NHS or between the NHS and social services, we would only share limited information that will be relevant to your current health needs. We will always ask your permission before your information is shared and you can tell us not to share it.

All health and social care organisations take the protection of personal data extremely seriously and will work to ensure the strictest confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Where possible, you will receive a copy of any communication between organisations (such as referral letters) when your health record is shared.

We will not share your information with anyone else (including family and friends) unless you give us permission to do so.

Special situations

There are a few circumstances where information must be shared by law, for example, all births and some infectious diseases must be reported. In these cases, a patient's consent is not required and you cannot refuse to allow this information to be shared.

In other circumstances, the Secretary of State for Health may give permission for the NHS to use or share data from which you could potentially be identified. For example, the care.data programme which combines information from your GP record with information from your hospital records to help research into earlier diagnosis of illnesses and development of better treatments. In these circumstances your prior consent is not sought but you have the right to opt out of having your information used in this way. You can tell your GP practice that you wish to opt out.

Opting out will not in any way affect the care or treatment you receive.