Confidentiality in the Berkshire Health Community

You and your health records

Berkshire NHS Health Community
Introduction

This leaflet explains why information is collected about you and the ways in which this information may be used.

Why we collect information about you

Your doctor and other health professionals caring for you keep records about your health and any treatment and care you receive from the NHS. These help ensure that you receive the best possible care from us. The records may include:

- Basic details about you such as address and next of kin
- Contacts we have had with you, such as clinic visits
- Notes and reports about your health and any treatment and care you receive
- Results of investigations, such as X-rays and laboratory tests
- Relevant information from other health professionals, relatives or those who care for you and 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 any other healthcare professionals involved in your care have accurate and up-to-date information to assess your health and decide what care you need when you visit in the future
- Full information is available should you see another doctor, or be referred to a specialist or another part of the NHS
- There is a good basis for assessing the type and quality of care you have received
- Your concerns can be properly investigated if you need to complain

Information you provide may also be used to manage and plan the NHS. Examples might include:

- Making sure our services meet patient needs in the future
- Paying your doctor, nurse, dentist, or other staff, and the hospital which treats you
- Auditing accounts
- Preparing statistics on NHS performance and activity (where steps will be taken to ensure you cannot be identified)
- Investigating complaints or legal claims
- Helping staff to review the care they provide and make sure it is of the highest standard
- Training and education of staff
- Undertaking research approved by the Local Research Ethics Committee (if anything to do with the research involves you personally you would be contacted to give your consent)
How we keep your records confidential

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

We may need to share information to other agencies about you so we can all work together for your benefit. We will only ever use or pass on information about you if others involved in your care have a genuine need for it.

We will not disclose your information to third parties without your permission unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as when the health or safety of others are at risk or when the law requires information to be passed on.

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

Our guiding principle is that we are holding your records in strict confidence.

How you can get access to your own health records.

The Data Protection Act 1998 allows you to find out what information about you is held in our records. This applies to both manual and computer processed records. This is known as "rights of subject access".

If you want to see your health records you should make a written request to the NHS organisations where you are being treated, or have been treated. You are entitled to receive a copy but you should note that a charge will usually be made.

If at any time you would like to know more about how we use your information you can speak to the person in charge of your care or write to the Data Protection Officer at:

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