

GP Connect information for patients

Patient information on changes to who can access your GP record to support health and care in the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The NHS is making significant changes to the way in which it operates, in order to best respond to the Coronavirus pandemic.

NHS staff are working in different ways to best help us to manage this pandemic, so we need to give them different access to information whilst it continues.

To help the NHS, we are improving the access that doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals have to medical records and information, so that they can more safely treat and advise patients who are not in their usual GP practice, who call 111 or are seen in hospitals and other healthcare settings.

Giving doctors, nurses and other health professionals access to the information they need will save lives.

Feedback

Your GP record

All patients registered with a GP practice have a detailed GP record managed by their GP practice. This includes information about your NHS care, including your medication, allergies, vaccinations, previous illnesses and test results, hospital discharge summaries, appointment letters and referral letters.

During the coronavirus pandemic, we are giving authorised staff, including GPs, authorised GP practice staff and NHS 111 clinicians, access to the GP records of the patients they are treating, when they need it, by using a secure NHS Digital service called GP Connect. The NHS 111 service will also be able to book appointments for you into your GP practice or other specialised services that may be available in your area.

This will allow general practice staff and healthcare professionals to have access to your GP record and work flexibly and safely, where they are most needed, as the pandemic develops.

Access to your GP record

The only people allowed access to your GP record will be those who have been securely verified as needing access to the information for your individual care. Your record will only be accessed by people involved in your treatment, and could include healthcare professionals working in GP practices, NHS 111 and other care settings.

Your GP practice that you are registered with will be able to monitor who has accessed your GP Records.

You will normally be asked for your explicit permission at the point of care before anyone other than your GP practice can look at your GP record.

The only circumstances where your permission would not be sought is where it is a genuine emergency, and you cannot give permission (for example you are unconscious).

Legal basis

Because the information will only be shared for the purposes of your individual care, this sharing meets the Common Law Duty of Confidence in both cases.

This data sharing is also required now as a result of the legal notice issued by the Secretary of State, requiring GP practices to share confidential patient information where it is required to diagnose, control and prevent the spread of the virus and manage the pandemic. Note the review and expiry on the notice - this may be extended if information sharing is still required in response to the ongoing pandemic.

Sharing information is lawful under the General Data Protection Regulation.

The Information Commissioner's Office, the National Data Guardian and the independent chair of the Summary Care Record Advisory Group have been consulted on these proposals and have expressed their support, recognising the extraordinary circumstances.

The British Medical Association (BMA) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) have also been consulted and have given their support for this action.

Your right to opt out

You have the right not to allow your GP record to be viewable by other organisations if you do not want it to be.

If you wish to opt out, you should inform your GP practice.

Opting out in this way will mean that other parts of the health and care system will be unable to access your GP record, even in an emergency, and even if you permit such access at the time you are in contact with them. This may make it harder for healthcare professionals to provide you with the care that you may need.

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