

# **DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Practice is committed to upholding the Data Protection Act.

Information is held on paper and/or on the practice computer system on every patient registered with the Practice. Strict rules of confidentiality apply to this information. The information held by the Practice and the use made of that information is summarised below. Note that this is not a comprehensive statement and there may be other areas which are covered by the Data Protection Act.

## Care & Treatment

- Routine record keeping, consultation or records, etc. in the course of the provision of care and treatment.
- Processing of records in the event of a medical emergency.
- Disclosures made by one health professional or organisation to another, e.g. where a GP refers a patient to a specialist or when a patient uses the out-of-hours service.
- Clinical audit e.g. the monitoring of a patient care pathway against existing standards and benchmarks.

## Administration

- Processing for administrative purposes, e.g. disclosure by a GP made in order to receive payment for treatment provided and post-payment verification of payments.
- Administrative audit, which may include studies designed to improve the efficiency of the NHS as an organisation, e.g. to support decisions about the allocation of resources.

## Research & Teaching

- Statutory disclosures to registries and for epidemiological research.
- Non-statutory disclosures to disease registries and for epidemiological research.
- Clinical trials.
- Hospital based teaching.
- University based teaching.

## Use and disclosure for non-health purposes

- Disclosures for Crime and Disorder Act 1998 purposes.
- Disclosures to police.
- Disclosures to hospital chaplains.
- Disclosures to the media.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, you will be contacted for consent should your information be selected for research purposes.

Certain services attract payments and these have to be verified from time to time and routine checks will be made for this purpose by NHS staff working out with the Practice.

You have the right to see your own medical records and if you wish to do so, please ask to speak to the Practice Manager, who will guide you through the process.

We respect all patients confidentially at all times in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The entire practice staff is bound by a strict policy of confidentiality and any breach of this is treated extremely seriously. All contractors and other individuals who visit the premises for any reason sign a confidentiality undertaking in the unlikely event that they should ascertain any information about a patient.

All information is protected and will not be released to anyone other than health care professionals involved in your care, without your consent.

We would emphasise to our teenage patients that this applies to you and that you can discuss all health matters, including sexual health, in strict confidence.

To provide you with the care you need, we hold the details of your consultations, illnesses, tests, prescriptions and other treatments that have been recorded by everyone involved in your care and treatment, e.g. GP, Health Visitor, and Practice Nurse. This information is stored on paper or electronically on computer files by practice staff.

We sometimes disclose some of your personal health information to other organisations involved in your care. For example, when your GP refers you to a specialist at the hospital we will send relevant details about you in the referral letter and receive information about you from them. Our practice also participates in regional and national programmes, such as the cervical cytology screening service, and your name and address, date of birth and health number will be given to them in order to send an invitation to you.

We need to use some of your personal health information for administrative purposes. In order to receive payment for services provided to you, we have to disclose basic details about you to the NHS Board responsible for this area and to the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service. These organisations have a role in protecting public funds and are authorised to check that payments are being properly made. We are required to co-operate with these checks, and the disclosure of your data is a necessary part of our provision of healthcare services.

Sometimes, we may participate in studies that are designed to improve the way services are provided to you or to check that our performance meets required standards and benchmarks. Whenever we take part in activities such as these we will ensure that as far as possible any details that may identify you are not disclosed.

We are sometimes involved in health research and the teaching of student nurses, doctors and other health professionals. We will not use or disclose your personal

health information for these purposes unless you have been informed beforehand and give your consent for us to do so.

Where you need a service jointly provided with a local authority we will seek your permission before giving them any of your details.

Sometimes we are required by law to pass on information, e.g., the notification of births and deaths and certain diseases or crimes is a legal requirement.

Our use of your personal health information is covered by a duty of confidentiality, and is regulated by the Data Protection Act 1988.

The Data Protection Act gives you a number of rights in relation to how your personal information is used, including a right to access the information we hold about you. If you wish to do so, please contact the Practice Manager.

If you have any queries or concerns on how we use your personal health information, or would like to access your information, please contact our Practice Manager, Mrs Tracey Malone.