

YOUR MEDICAL RECORD – PROTECTING YOUR INFORMATION

'A patient information guide to how information is used in the NHS'

How your information is used to help you:

As you know, the team of professionals caring for you keep records about your health and the care you receive. These are important to help ensure that you receive the best possible care and treatment.

Your records are used to:

- ensure that the staff caring for you have accurate and up to date information to assess your health needs and decide what care you need in the future.
- ensure that full information is available should you need another form of care, for example if you are referred to a specialist service.
- ensure that there is a good basis for looking back and checking on the type and quality of care you received.
- ensure that your concerns can be properly looked into if you complain.

Your information also helps us to plan services for the future. It also allows us to monitor the way public money is spent.

If you do not want certain information recorded, please talk to the person in charge of your care. If you feel that you are unable to do this, or you are not happy with the outcome, you should write to the Trust.

Education and research

Whilst always safeguarding confidentiality, your information can also help us in:

- training and educating staff. You will be asked whether or not you wish to be involved personally. Where appropriate, your consent will be recorded in writing.
- Research, approved by the Local Research Ethics Committee, again you will be asked whether or not you wish to be identified personally. You would not be involved personally unless you had agreed to this.

Keeping your information confidential:

Everyone working for The NHS has a legal duty to maintain the highest level of confidentiality. This means that relevant information is only shared with people involved in your care, who may come from more than one organisation, for example:

- Your GP practice
- Local hospital trust
- Social Services
- NHS walk-in centres
- NHS Direct

If you consent, information can also be shared with relatives, partners or friends who act as a carer for you. Consent can also be over-riden if justified through risk or if it is required by law.

When information needs to be passed between people from different organisations, it is passed securely and kept confidential by the people who receive it. We only pass on information about you if it is in your interest. Whenever we can, we shall remove details that identify you.

Sharing your information without consent:

There are circumstances where we have to pass on information about you. While we would normally seek your consent, there are times when we may have to share your information without your consent, for example:

- To prevent risk to self and others
- Investigation or prevention of serious crime
- Control of infectious diseases
- Notification of new births
- Formal court order

However, the guiding principle is that your information is held in strict confidence.

Information for managing and planning:

In order to manage and plan within the NHS, some of the information about you is sent to the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) responsible for your care, and to the Department of Health. A copy of this information is also held centrally.

The NHS register for England and Wales contains basic personal details of all patients registered with a General Practitioner (GP).

Further copies of this centrally held information are strictly controlled by the NHS Information Authority which takes advice from the Security and

Confidentiality Advisory Group. This is an independent body that reports to the Government Chief Medical Officer.

Information held centrally is not used to make any decisions about the treatment or care that you receive from your hospital or GP.

Further information:

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.
- Write to the Trust's Caldicott Guardian who is the Senior Manager responsible for confidentiality of patient information. The RUH Caldicott Guardian is Martin O'Driscoll and he can be contacted at the address at the foot of this page.
- The following websites may also help:
www.doh.gov.uk
www.dataprotection.gov.uk

Royal United Hospital NHS Trust
Combe Park
BATH
BA1 3NG

Tel: (01225) 428331