Shared Records Q&A

Health services in Cumbria are introducing a new linked medical records system, which allows healthcare professionals the ability to share some information from your medical records with other health services that provide you with care. This information is limited and is called a 'shared record'.

If you give permission, the healthcare professionals you visit can view your shared record or an appropriate section of it on a computer. This is done via a secure NHS network connection, not the Internet.

You can decline to share your record.

Question and Answer

The leaflet 'Changes to your medical records' provides the most important information about shared records. You can get a copy from your GP Surgery or at www.cumbria.nhs.uk.

The following Q&As will help to answer some of the questions you may have. Some of the questions relate to medical records in general, as well as specific questions about shared records. Please contact your GP Surgery if you have any further questions.

What is a shared record?
Each health service you visit adds clinical information to their own record of you care. Shared records allow relevant information from these records – such as medications, allergies, test results and treatment - to be viewed collectively as one record.

Why are you launching shared records?
We want to make sure that information about patients' health and care history can safely follow them wherever they receive care and treatment, so that the professionals who treat them have all the information they need to know in order to provide the right care.

Healthcare staff already share important information on their patients' health when providing care to the same patient. In the past, patient records were written, and could only be shared by letter, email, fax or phone. This could be slow and there was a risk that things got lost on the way.

GPs in South Lakeland are introducing shared records to ensure that healthcare professionals treating you have quick access to the most up-to-date and accurate information about your overall health, medications and current treatments, but in a more secure and effective way.

This will allow healthcare staff to give you better advice and provide safer and more effective care.

It will help to ensure that mistakes are avoided and can also reduce the need for you to give different health services the same information repeatedly.

Is this part of the national Summary Care Record?
No. This is a local shared record, not linked to a national system.

MEDICAL RECORDS

Will shared records now mean that I only have one medical record?
No, each health service will continue to add clinical information to their own record of your care. Shared records allow relevant information from these records to be viewed collectively in one record.

Can I refuse to have my records put onto the shared records system?
Yes. If you do not want your records to be included on the shared records system, please contact your GP Surgery who can 'disable sharing' by entering a code onto the shared records system. This will mean your record cannot be found or accessed on the shared records system.

What are my rights about how you keep my information confidential?
You have the right to expect us to keep your health information private. You also have rights to make sure we keep your details confidential under the Data Protection Act 1998, human rights legislation (1998) and the common law.

In every place we treat you, there are people who are responsible for making sure your details are kept confidential. They are sometimes known as Information, or Caldicott, Guardians.

Your rights to privacy and our commitment to protect them are set out in the NHS leaflet '*Your health information, confidentiality and the NHS Care Records Service'* which you can download at **www.nhscarerecords.nhs.uk/** under 'Publications'.

I am under 16, will I have a shared record?
Yes.

Can you share information within my record with anyone else without my permission?
The only way that information about your health could be shared is if your GP or healthcare professional is concerned that you will harm yourself or others, or if you are involved in a serious crime and information is released in the public interest or the interest of your future safety. However there are very strict laws on confidentiality and the need for any breech in confidentiality would have to be proved.

Currently, parents or legal guardians have the right to have access to their child's records if their child is under 16.

As more information is stored on computer, what will happen to my old paper medical records?
By law, we must keep your old records, usually for 10 years after the last entry. Then we must either destroy them, or securely store them.

Is this system being used elsewhere in Cumbria?
Yes. The system is gradually being rolled out across Cumbria to improve patient care.

CONTENT OF SHARED RECORDS

What information do you keep in my shared records?
We keep information about you so we can provide you with safe, effective care. The information we keep falls into two categories – **demographic information** (information about you) and **clinical information** (information about your health).

Demographic information includes:

- Your name (including the name you prefer to use) and any other name you may have used in the past
- Your main or temporary address (and where to send post, if this is different)
- Your contact details (phone, fax, e-mail), how you prefer us to contact you and the time of day you prefer us to contact you
- The way you prefer us to write to you (in Braille or large print, for example)
- Your place and date of birth, sex, age and NHS number
- Your GP practice and the pharmacy you want us to send your prescriptions to electronically (where available)
- Death records

Clinical information includes:

- Your medicines and any bad reactions you have had to any medicines you have taken
- Any allergies you may have
- Health conditions such as asthma or heart problems, as well as treatments, referrals and diagnoses.
- Test results

I don't want some sensitive information about my health to be shared, can I limit this?
If you are concerned about sharing sensitive information, please contact your GP Surgery or the healthcare professional treating you.

How do you know the information in my shared records is correct?
Rigorous quality assurance procedures have been established to ensure that data in the shared record is identical to that stored on the local medical record. It is the responsibility of each health service to ensure the integrity of the information within their record of your care.

Can I stop information being put into my medical records?
Healthcare staff are required to make accurate, relevant records of the care they provide to you and your condition. You can discuss what is recorded, where it is recorded and how it is expressed but you cannot prevent a health-care professional from making some record of relevant information. However, there should be *"no surprises*" as to what is recorded about you.

Only limited information from your medical records - such as medications, test results, allergies and treatment - can be viewed in your shared record.

Can staff add things to my medical records without me knowing?
All staff are trained on how to record important details about your health and treatment. Healthcare professionals may add notes to your record during your appointment and you can ask to see what is being written. The healthcare professional may also use the time between appointments to update your medical record. The information recorded will be a brief but accurate statement on your condition, treatment, diagnosis or the health advice that has been given to you. If you do not want your healthcare professional to add to your record while you are not there, speak to them during your appointment.

ACCESS TO SHARED RECORDS

Which health services can access my shared record?
Shared records are being introduced by GPs in South Lakeland. In time, all health services in Cumbria provided by or on behalf of NHS Cumbria will be able to access shared records, with your permission. This will include out of hour's health services, hospital wards and A&E departments within Cumbria, community health services such as district nurses, podiatrists and occupational therapists and county wide health services such as Cumbria Diabetes and the Cumbria Stop Smoking Service.

Access will only be granted to those professionals who need to access information to support your ongoing health and only with your ongoing agreement.

Your GP will determine which services can access your shared record. At the start of your treatment, you will be asked directly for your permission to view your shared record. Your shared record will only be accessed while you are being treated.

Only the health care professionals who are treating you can access your record. Access is **role based** – this means that a receptionist, for example, will only be able to see basic information like name, address and appointments. A GP would be able to see everything in care settings he is allowed to access, unless they had been specifically made private.

Will dentists, opticians and pharmacists working in the community be able to see my records?
No.

Can my shared record be accessed without my permission?
Not routinely. The healthcare professional has to complete a 'permission to view' screen on the computer to confirm that you have given permission before gaining access to your record. If you say 'no', your response will be entered onto the system and access to your shared record will be denied.

The NHS has a legal duty to disclose information without consent in the prevention of terrorism, road traffic incidents or with a Court Order. This legal duty extends to other Acts, i.e. Crime and Disorder and the Children's Act, but we will always consider obtaining consent.

In addition, your record may be accessed in a medical emergency. If someone is unconscious or too unwell to give their permission the system will allow a healthcare professional to view the patient's shared record without permission.

All access attempts to your record are recorded and fully auditable.

What is a Caldicott Guardian and Caldicott Principles?
Caldicott Guardians are senior staff in the NHS and social services appointed to protect patient information and ensure that Caldicott Principles are adhered to.

Caldicott Principles are a set of six general principles/rules that are followed by Social Care and Health professionals when working with person-identifiable and confidential information. They are:

- Justify the purpose(s) of using person-identifiable and confidential information
- Only use it when absolutely necessary
- Use the minimum that is required
- Access should be on a strict need-to-know basis
- Everyone must understand his or her responsibilities
- Understand and comply with the law

What can receptionists see?
Receptionists do not have access to clinical (medical) information, but will be able to see some information such as your address and date of birth in order to book your appointments.

All staff are aware of their responsibilities to keep your information confidential, receive annual training and understand and comply with the Law.

Will I be able to access my own shared record?
Yes, you can ask to see your shared records wherever you are treated, for example at your GP Surgery, hospital or clinic.

If you want to see your full, detailed records, you will need to follow the procedures laid out by the Data Protection Act 1998 called making a "Subject Access Request" - i.e. make an application in writing. You may have to pay a small charge. Please ask your own GP about access to your detailed medical records.

If I give permission to view my shared record, how long does this permission last?
At the start of your treatment, you will be asked directly for your permission to view your shared record. Your shared record will only be accessed while you are being treated. This permission will last throughout your treatment, up to 90 days.

What if I change my mind, and don't want to share my record anymore?
Tell the healthcare professional involved in your care that you no longer want them to view your shared record and they will close your record.

I don't want to share my record with other health services, other than my own GP Surgery. How will the shared records system know this?
If you do not want to share your record with anyone outside of your GP Surgery, please inform your GP Surgery who can 'disable sharing' by entering a code into your record which will remove your information from the shared records system.

How will healthcare staff doing home visits be able to access my shared record?
The records are accessed via the NHS N3 network on a computer. In time, community staff may be able to access shared records using small, hand held computers. These devices are password protected and encrypted (scrambled) making the data unreadable to anyone who doesn't have a security password. This means that in the event of the hand held computers being lost or stolen, other individuals will not be able to access any information contained on them. All NHS IT equipment uses the same level of security and is regularly reviewed.

Does NHS Cumbria use my medical records for anything else, other than direct patient care?
The people caring for you use your information to provide treatment, check the quality of your care, help you make good decisions about your health and to investigate complaints.

Sometimes NHS Cumbria uses your information more generally to:

- check the quality of care we provide to everyone;
- protect the health of the general public;
- monitor how we spend public money;
- plan and manage health services;
- carry out research.

If we use your information for these reasons, we remove your name and other details which could identify you. If we need the information in a form that identifies you, we usually ask you first.

In limited situations, we may need to (by law) give out information about you without your permission. In all cases, we will only provide the information needed. Wherever possible, we will tell you. For example, we may need to:

- tell authorities about the birth of a child;
- report food-poisoning cases to authorities;
- report some infectious diseases;
- provide information to be used in court; and
- give information to the police to help detect or prevent a crime.

In limited circumstances the independent Patient Information Advisory Group (a group of health care staff and patients (PIAG)) can give us permission to use your information without asking you, if they think it is very important and it would not be practical to get your permission. For example, some important health research involves thousands of patients. In these cases, contacting every patient for their permission may not be practical.

SECURITY OF SHARED RECORDS

Where is the information stored?
Data is stored in data centres. These centres are fully accredited to the ISO 27001 information security standard, and all data storage and management procedures and processes adhere to the rigorous ISO 27001 standards. The centres are equipped with full biometric security, for example fingerprint recognition, to restrict access.

Date centre servers are connected to the NHS N3 network, not to the Internet. More information on the N3 network is available at www.n3.nhs.uk/.

Is there a danger that someone could hack into my record?
It would be very difficult to hack into it because the system uses the strongest security measures available. As part of ongoing security of information, the NHS has various means of detecting whether someone is hacking into our systems, i.e. penetration testing. A full security check on the system is carried out annually.

No system is ever 100% secure from threats to its security, however the system uses the highest security available and is monitored in accordance with national guidance.

Could my records be accidentally deleted or lost?
There is strong protection to prevent any information about you being lost or deleted. The information is copied to a separate secure server so there is always a back up to support business continuity.

Can I, or anybody else, transfer my records on to a memory stick?
As part of our Privacy Impact Assessment to check compliance with Privacy Laws, Confidentiality Code of Conduct and Data Protection Act Compliance we have locked the facilities on all our computers so that no information can be downloaded onto a memory stick (encrypted or otherwise). In addition no information will be stored on the hard drive of the computer so it cannot be viewed by anyone else once your record is closed.

Who polices the system to see if there have been unauthorised access and how do they know if there has been?
An electronic record is kept of everyone who accesses shared records. An alert will be sent to a nominated member of staff (known as a Privacy Officer) where access occurs in an unexpected setting, for example, if a healthcare professional who doesn't usually treat you accesses your information. If it is found that the access was unreasonable, we will let you know and disciplinary action will be taken if necessary.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please visit the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/records/healthrecords/ for more information on medical records.