

Confidentiality and Information Sharing: information for service users and carers

Why do we need to keep confidential information about you?

We collect information so that we can work out what care and assistance is most appropriate for our service users.

The Trust uses computerised patient information systems. These are secure systems accessed by individual user accounts which are subject to audit trails to show who has looked at a person's information; all staff know that it is a disciplinary offence for anyone to look at information without good reason.

The way that information about you is collected and held is governed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (2018), which outline how personal information must be handled. As part of staff training the importance of confidentiality is explained and emphasised.

Why do we need to share information?

You have a right to have information about you kept confidential, but we may need to share some at times to make sure you get the services you need.

By sharing information with people directly involved in your care, we try to reduce the need for you to repeat the same information. Sometimes information needs to be shared to protect you, or other people who may be at risk.

Some information is shared with other NHS and social care organisations to ensure that we continue to provide good services. When your information is used for teaching or research purposes, details that might identify you personally are removed unless you have agreed otherwise.

Who is information shared with?

Information is shared with professionals or staff directly involved with the provision, planning and management of your care i.e. your care team. Your care team might need access to your relevant past health and social care records.

Relevant information is shared with other services or teams when they also need information to provide you with an appropriate service.

Sharing information without your agreement

There are some situations in which we may have to pass information to people outside of Sheffield Health & Social Care Trust without your consent. These are:

- when we are required by law or court order
- when it is necessary to protect you or someone else
- to prevent, detect or prosecute a serious crime
- where professionals need to share information as part of their duty of care

If possible, this will be discussed with you before it is done. However, if you are too unwell, or if to do so would put the worker at serious risk, this might not be possible at the time.

Looking at your information

You have a right to see the information we keep about you. You can ask your worker about this or there is more information about making requests on our website:

<https://shsc.nhs.uk/service/medical-records/>

You have the right to challenge any records you think are incorrect, and in cases of disagreement you can add a comment to the notes.

If you would like to know who has accessed your electronic notes, your worker can check this for you.

You're entitled to have copies of letters written about you, unless there are clear reasons why this could be harmful.

Sharing information with carers and relatives

Relatives and friends are often a vital part of the support people have in their lives. Many people are pleased for their relatives or carers to be involved in discussions. However, carers do not have an automatic right to be involved, even if they are your next of kin or nearest relative.

Staff will discuss with you any concerns you have about them sharing information with relatives and carers, and help you to decide what you need to keep private and what they can say if relatives make enquiries about how you are, and how they can help.

It may be necessary for us to ask for information and views from relatives and carers (without disclosing confidential information), and their right to confidentiality will be respected in the same way, subject to the same exceptions.

Other useful information

Mental Health Advocacy Service supports users of mental health services to make sure that their views and concerns are heard by others.

Freephone 0800 035 0396.

The Information Commissioner's Office oversees the operation of data protection legislation and can consider complaints if personal information has been misused.

<https://ico.org.uk/>

Complaints & compliments

If you have a complaint or compliment about the way information has been managed or used, please contact:

The Head of Corporate Affairs
Sheffield Health & Social Care
Fulwood House, Old Fulwood Road
Sheffield S10 3TH
Tel: 0114 271 8956 e-mail: complaints@shsc.nhs.uk

If you have any questions about the way your information is processed you can contact the SHSC Data Protection Officer:

DPO@shsc.nhs.uk

or write to:

The Data Protection Officer
Information Department
Fulwood House, Old Fulwood Road
Sheffield S10 3TH

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