

Your Information and COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Last updated on 7 December 2020

This notice describes how we may use your information to protect you and others during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is a supplement to the Wirral University Teaching Hospital's main privacy notice.

The health and social care system is facing significant pressures due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Health and care information is essential to deliver care to individuals, to support health and social care services and to protect public health. Information will also be vital in researching, monitoring, tracking and managing the outbreak. In the current emergency it has become even more important to share health and care information across relevant organisations.

Existing law which allows confidential patient information to be used and shared appropriately and lawfully in a public health emergency is being used during this outbreak. Using this law the Secretary of State has stated that health organisations, local authorities, GPs and organisations such as NHS Digital, NHS England and Improvement and Public Health England should share confidential patient information to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak and support the efforts to tackle it. Any information used or shared during the COVID-19 outbreak will be limited to the period of the outbreak unless there is another legal basis to use the data. Further information is available on gov.uk [here](#) and some FAQs on this law are available [here](#).

During this period of emergency, opt-outs will not generally apply to the data used to support the COVID-19 outbreak owing to the public interest in sharing information. This includes [National Data Opt-outs](#). However in relation to the Summary Care Record, existing choices will be respected. Where data is used and shared under these laws your right to have personal data erased will also not apply. It may also take us longer to respond to Subject Access Requests (SARs), Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and any new opt-out requests whilst we focus our efforts on responding to the outbreak.

In order to look after your health and care needs we may share your confidential patient information including health and care records with clinical and non clinical staff in other health and care providers, for example neighbouring GP practices, social services, hospitals and NHS 111. We may also use the details we have to send public health messages to you, either by phone, text or email.

During this period of emergency we may offer you a consultation via telephone or video-conferencing. By accepting the invitation and entering the consultation you are consenting to this. Your personal/confidential information will be safeguarded in the same way it would with any other consultation.

If you are admitted to hospital with COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 we are offering a family liaison service to help keep you in touch with your loved ones at a time when visiting may not be possible. The Family Support Team will proactively contact your next of kin to facilitate the sharing of messages and provide updates on your care. This will help you keep in regular contact with your next of kin and also enable staff on your ward to spend more time providing direct care to you.

We are also required to share personal/confidential information with health and care organisations and other bodies engaged in disease surveillance for the purposes of protecting public health, providing healthcare services to the public and monitoring and managing the outbreak. Further information about how health and care data is being used and shared by other NHS and social care organisations in a variety of ways to support the COVID-19 response is [here](#). Please be assured that this will involve collecting the minimum amount of information required, not using the information collected for the COVID-19 response for unrelated purposes, ensuring appropriate safeguards are in place and only keeping the information for as long as the outbreak is ongoing.

As part of the COVID-19 response, data will be shared to a national database to help support the flu and COVID-19 immunisation programmes.

NHS England and Improvement and NHSX have developed a single, secure store to gather data from across the health and care system to inform the COVID-19 response. This includes data already collected by NHS England, NHS Improvement, Public Health England and NHS Digital. New data will include 999 call data, data about hospital occupancy and A&E capacity data as well as [data provided by patients themselves](#). All the data held in the platform is subject to strict controls that meet the requirements of data protection legislation.

We may also share shielding data with Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for vulnerable groups.

In such circumstances where you tell us you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms we may need to collect specific health data about you. Where we need to do so, we will not collect more information than needed and we will ensure that any information collected is appropriately safeguarded.

We may amend this privacy notice at any time. The date at the top of this page will be amended each time this notice is updated.