

Your information **Your** rights

What **you** need to know



This leaflet explains why NHS Wales collects information about you and how this information may be used

It also tells you about your right to see your health records and how to gain access to them

Why does NHS Wales collect information about you?



To help **you**

Your doctor (hospital doctor and GP) or other health professionals caring for you, keep records about your health and any treatment or care you receive from NHS Wales. This information is either written down or held on a computer. These records are then used to guide and manage the care you receive. This is to make sure that:

- any health professional involved in your care has accurate and up-to-date information to assess your health and decide what care you need
- you are invited to receive routine treatment such as immunisations and screening
- there is a good basis for assessing the type and quality of care you have received. This will lead to better care both for you and for other patients in the future
- if you need to complain about the care you receive, your concerns or complaints can be properly investigated

You may receive care from organisations that are not part of NHS Wales, such as Social Services or private and voluntary healthcare providers. If so, there may be a need to share some information about you so that everyone involved in your care can work together for your benefit.

Information about you will only be used or passed on to others involved with your care, if they need it.

Whenever your information is used for your care, it will be handled in the strictest confidence. NHS Wales will:

- not normally disclose your personal information without your consent, unless it is in your best interests or required by law
- ensure that only the minimum amount of information needed will be passed on
- ensure that anyone receiving information about you is under an obligation to keep it confidential and to only use the information for the specified purpose
- ensure that information sharing agreements between organisations will control the way your information is shared
- have secure systems in place to help prevent unauthorised access to patient information held on its computers

To help **NHS Wales**

Your information is also used to run and improve the NHS in Wales. It may be used to:

- review the care given to patients to make sure it is of the highest possible standard
- make sure services are planned to meet patients' needs in the future
- investigate complaints, legal claims or important incidents
- ensure that money is used properly to pay for the services it provides
- check and report on how effective NHS Wales has been
- make sure that NHS Wales gives value for money

Whenever possible all personal information will be removed. When this is not possible rules and contracts are put in place to ensure that patient information is kept safe.

NHS Wales sometimes has to use organisations outside the NHS to provide information services, for example audit or computer system maintenance. Where this is the case the organisations must meet strict NHS rules.

To help **others**

Your information may be used to help protect and improve the health of other people, and to help create new services.

Where necessary, to comply with the law, your doctor may have to give information to certain organisations, for example if you have an infectious disease which might endanger the safety of others (e.g. meningitis or measles).

Some services need information to support medical research and find out how diseases develop. This will make sure that:

- healthcare organisations can plan ahead and provide the right services to the right people
- progress can be made in diagnosing and managing diseases
- drugs can be made more effective, for example by reducing side effects



Accessing your health records

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to either look at or receive a copy of your health records (whether on computer or written). You should note that a charge will usually apply (up to a maximum of £50).

Requests to access your health record must be made in writing, you should provide enough information to identify yourself and the period of time or specific treatment you want records for.

Once your request has been checked you will be told of any charges which may apply.

Your information will be provided to you within 40 calendar days, after your fee has been received.

Under the law there may be some rare circumstances when the information you have requested cannot be provided to you.

If you wish to access your NHS Wales health records you should send your request to the organisation providing your treatment. More information about who to contact can be found on **www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk**.



Information held on computer

NHS Wales stores your information on computer systems, for example your contact details, laboratory and x-ray results.

New technology now allows the information held about you to be shared between NHS Wales computers. This means important details about your health will be available to the health professionals looking after you, wherever you receive your care. For example, doctors and nurses working in the out of hours service can now see parts of the medical record held about you by your GP (available across Wales by 2011). The benefits to you, and your doctor, are:

- immediate access to your information in an emergency
- healthcare professionals can see your current and previous health contacts, medications and hospital discharge information
- time is saved in bringing together information to make vital decisions about your care



Further information

If you have any concerns about the way your information is used you should discuss these with the healthcare professional responsible for your care.

If you would like to know more about how your personal information is used please visit the NHS Direct Wales website at **www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk**.

