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Use of your NHS number in adult social care

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Privacy notice

If you are receiving support from adult social care then the NHS may share your NHS number with adult social care.

This is so that the NHS and adult social care are using the same number to identify you whilst providing your care. By using the same number the NHS and adult social care can work together more closely to improve your care and support.

Your NHS number is accessed through an NHS service called the Personal Demographic Service (PDS). Adult social care sends basic information such as your name, address and date of birth to the PDS in order to find your NHS Number.

Once retrieved from the PDS the NHS Number is stored in the council's adult social care case management system.

These data are retained in the adult social care system in line with the council's retention policy.

In terms of the Data Protection Act the council is both the Data Controller and the Data Processor.

The NHS Number then has two uses, the first being a unique identifier to allow social care information to be displayed in the council's adult social care case management system, for the provision of direct care.

We will also use this number in an integrated care record system across a number of support services including GP's, hospitals, community matrons, district nurses and social care practitioners.

The council will share information only to provide health and social care professionals directly involved in your care with access to the most up-to-date information about you. It will do this by sharing appropriate information between health and social care services at the time of patient contact. Access to information is strictly controlled, based on the role of the professional. For example, social workers will only have access to information that is relevant to the execution of their care duties.

All council employees are subject to confidentiality and we will ensure that your information is protected, and available only to staff directly involved in your care.

The use of joined up information across health and social care brings many benefits. One specific example where this will be the case is the discharge of patients into social care. Delays in discharge (commonly known as bed blocking) can occur because details of social care involvement are not readily available to the staff on the hospital ward. The hospital does not know who to contact to discuss the ongoing care of a patient. The linking of social care and health information via the NHS number will help hospital staff quickly identify if social care support is already in place and who the most appropriate contact is.

Ongoing care can be planned earlier in the process, because hospital staff will know who to talk to.

The addition of the NHS Number to social care data will bring additional benefits:

- Better co-ordinated and safer care across health and social care enabled through the sharing of real-time information
- Better co-ordination of discharges from hospital into social care, as explained above
- More time to spend on planning and coordinating social care because health staff can identify and involve social care staff earlier in the process
- Earlier intervention to maximise the opportunities or reablement services leading to greater independence for patients
- Less paperwork and more efficient use of social care resources

You have the right to object to the processing of your NHS Number in this way. This will not stop you from receiving care, but will result in the benefits outlined above not being realised. To help you decide, we will discuss with you how this may affect our ability to provide you with care, and any other options you have.

If you wish to opt-out from the use of your NHS number for social care purposes, please talk with your social worker.

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