

Working with other organisations on clinical audit projects

Some clinical audits may require us to work with our partner organisations. For example, if we are undertaking a clinical audit of falls in older people in the community, a group of GPs, hospital staff, community staff (district nurses, etc) and care home staff may need to work together to ensure the care provided at each point has been to the highest standard.

We may share your information with our partner organisations:

- NHS trusts (primary care, hospitals, ambulance services)
- strategic health authorities
- general practitioners (GPs)
- special health authorities.

Dependent on the subject involved in the clinical audit, we may also need to involve:

- social services
- education services
- local authorities
- voluntary sector providers
- the private sector.

Working together in this way will be done under strict sharing protocols to ensure the security and confidentiality of all information.

Further information about how your health information is shared safely and securely can be found in the *NHS Care Records Service – Your questions answered* leaflet. Contact your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) to order a copy.

Can I help with clinical audit projects in my area?

Clinical audit teams are constantly working to involve patients, carers and the public in projects wherever possible. To find out about opportunities to get involved with quality improvement projects in your area go to your local NHS organisation's website or contact the local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Contact us

If you have any queries about any aspect of clinical audit and the information held about you by your local NHS organisations, please contact your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). You can find your local PALS by visiting www.pals.nhs.uk.

Your local PALS telephone number is



Using your health records to improve healthcare

Clinical audit in the NHS

In the National Health Service, we aim to provide you with the highest quality of health care. To do this we must keep records about you, your health and the care we have provided or plan to provide to you. These records may be used by our teams to check the quality of the care we provide using clinical audit.

What is clinical audit?

The information held in your health records can be used to assess the quality of the care you have received against nationally and locally agreed best practice standards of care. The results of this assessment can then be used to make changes and improvements to the care we provide to our patients. This process is known as **clinical audit**.

Clinical audit can be undertaken in a variety of ways; your information may be accessed via electronic systems or paper records and may be explored in different levels of depth.

Each NHS organisation has a team of specialists working with your healthcare professionals on clinical audit and other quality improvement projects.

Examples of clinical audit

There are many types of clinical audit which may be carried out but here are some examples.

We may look at referral letters sent by your GP to other services (e.g. hospital departments) to make sure they contain clear details of your condition or treatment. This is to check the receiving service is able to provide the appropriate care.

We may assess more complex clinical details surrounding the use of appropriate drugs. We will look at national guidance surrounding the use of a drug and check to make sure your health professional gives you it when you need it.

A clinical audit may be used to check the right details are being recorded in your health records.

Your questions answered...

What information will you use?

We may use various aspects of your information for clinical audit purposes. This will only be information specifically relevant to the subject being assessed, for example if we were auditing diabetes we would only look at information that may relate to that condition.

Wherever possible we will only use anonymous information from your records. All information will be kept completely secure and only used where absolutely necessary.

Will you tell me if my information is being used in clinical audit?

We would not contact you directly if your information was going to be used in a clinical audit as the majority of the time your information would be kept anonymous; therefore it would be difficult for us to contact individuals directly.

Can I access records held by the NHS about me?

You have the right to ask for a copy of all records held about you (you may have to pay a fee for this). This will not detail specific clinical audits in which your information has been used, it will only display the information which is currently held on our systems about you.

If you wish to request a copy of your records:

- Your request must be made in writing to the organisation holding your information.
- There may be a charge to have a printed copy of the information.
- We are required to respond to you within 40 days.
- You will need to provide adequate information (for example, full name, address, date of birth, NHS number etc).

- You will be required to provide identification before any information is released to you.

If you think anything is inaccurate or incorrect, please inform the organisation holding your information.

You have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the common law duty of confidence (the Disability Discrimination and the Race Relations Acts also may apply).

The Data Protection Act 1998 requires organisations to notify the Information Commissioner of the purposes for which they process personal information. The details are publicly available from: The Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

How do we keep your records confidential?

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential.

We have a duty to:

- maintain full and accurate records of the care we provide to you
- keep records about you confidential, secure and accurate
- provide information in a format that is accessible to you.

We will not share information that identifies you for any reason, unless:

- you ask us to do so
- we ask and you give us specific permission
- we have to do this by law
- we have special permission for health or research purposes
- we have special permission because the interests of the public are thought to be of greater importance than your confidentiality.

We are holding your records in strict confidence.