

5 September 2013

Dear Practice Manager

We are writing to outline our plans for extracting coded GP data as part of the *care.data* Programme. This letter;

- provides background information about the programme
- explains what you must now do under your GP responsibilities as a data controller
- provides links to a number of resources that we hope you will find helpful

Background

NHS England is commissioning a modern data service from the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) on behalf of the entire health and social care system. Known as *care.data*, this programme will build on the existing data services such as the Hospital Episodes Statistics (HES) service, which was launched in 1989, and expand it to provide linked data, that will eventually cover all care settings, both in and outside of hospital.

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, NHS England has the power to direct the HSCIC to collect information from all providers of NHS care, including general practices. The specification of the data to be extracted by GP practices were considered by the Joint GP IT Committee of the British Medical Association and the Royal College of General Practitioners, as well as an independent advisory group. Details are available here: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/caredata>

The General Practice Extraction Service (GPES) will be used to extract GP data each month. Initially the data will cover the period from April 2013 onwards. The identifiers to be extracted are: NHS number, date of birth, postcode, and gender which will allow patients' GP data to be linked to their hospital data. No free text will be extracted, only coded information about referrals, NHS prescriptions and other clinical data. The technical specification of the extract can be found at <http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/tsd/data-info/>

What practices need to do now

Upon receipt of this letter, you will have approximately 8 weeks to make your patients aware before the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) will begin extracting data via the GP Extraction Service (GPES) for those patients who have not objected. The GPES training materials can be found at <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/gpestraining>

During this time it is important to make patients aware of what is happening and give them the opportunity to object to this extraction.

Next steps:

1. We have produced posters and leaflets for your use (further details are provided under 'Guidance and Resources' below). Please display the posters in the practice as soon as possible and make the information leaflets available to your patients.

2. Please make the same information available on your website and in any routine patient communications, such as e-bulletins, alongside repeat prescriptions and patient newsletters.
3. Please advise your staff that they should respond to any queries or concerns from patients by directing them to the patient leaflet and to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) we are also providing.
4. Patients' objections to flows of confidential data should be respected. If a patient objects the appropriate codes should be added to the GP record, as detailed in the 'care.data guide for GP practices'.

Guidance and Resources

Within the next 7 working days you will receive supporting materials in the post, including patient posters and leaflets. Having received your initial supply you will have the opportunity to order further supplies, please see guidance notes on how to do this. In addition we have produced a number of online resources to support you. This 'toolkit' can be found at <http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/tsd/care-data/gp-toolkit/>

Our guidance is designed to help you:

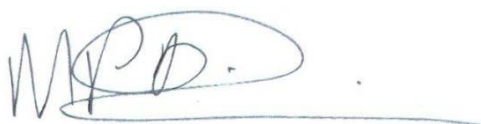
- understand the purpose of the care.data service, including a joint statement from NHS England, HSCIC, the BMA, and the RCGP;
- raise awareness with patients about how their confidential data will be used to support commissioning, public health planning and research;
- meet your *fair processing* obligations as a data controller;
- understand what to do if a patient objects to the extraction of their confidential data.

Questions

If you have any questions about the care.data extract, please telephone the HSCIC Contact Centre on 0845 300 6016 (open from 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday) or send an email to: enquiries@hscic.gov.uk (quoting '**care.data - GP**' in the subject line). Please note that the contact centre can only deal with queries from clinicians and GP practice staff. It has been agreed that patient enquiries should be addressed by GP practices using the FAQs we have provided.

We look forward to working with you to support the new care.data service. We are confident that care.data will rapidly be seen as an invaluable resource for clinicians and commissioners as we work to improve the quality, efficiency, and equity of the NHS.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Mark Davies FRCP FRCGP
Director of Clinical and Public Assurance
Health and Social Care Information Centre



Dr. Geraint Lewis FRCP FFPH
Chief Data Officer
NHS England