

The Scottish Ambulance Service



Patient Information and Confidentiality

Version 2.0

This leaflet explains why information is collected about you by the Scottish Ambulance Service and the ways in which this information may be used

1. Why does the Scottish Ambulance Service need my personal information and what is it used for?

The Scottish Ambulance Service (the Service) provides accident and emergency, non-emergency patient transport and access to urgent care services to the population of Scotland. These services will require a certain level of information to be collected about you. This may be written (manual records), or held on a computer (electronic records). The information can include:

- Basic details about you, such as name and address;
- Medical condition;
- Current medications.

NHS staff use your information to give you the care and treatment you need. They will share relevant information with other NHS staff involved in your care including your GP. This makes caring for you safer, easier and faster. For example, information is shared if:

- We take you to hospital;
- You are moved from one hospital to another;
- You need support at home such as a visit from a district nurse or falls service;
- You need to be referred to another NHS provider or service.

2. How else does the Service use my information?

The Scottish Ambulance Service uses relevant information about you to help improve NHS services and the health of the public. Your information may be used to:

- Help staff review the care they provide to ensure it is of the highest standard;
- Teach and train staff;
- Protect the health of the public;
- Provide statistics, performance and planning information;
- Find out how many people have a particular illness or disease;
- Carry out health research and development;
- Investigate complaints, legal claims or untoward incidents.

When information is needed to manage the wider health service, careful measures are taken to ensure that individual patients cannot be identified. Your name, address and other information that identifies you is removed wherever possible. For health research and audit only properly anonymised data will be used and all NHS research is approved by a group of ethics experts before being carried out. Sometimes the NHS uses information that does identify you. If they do this, they will usually explain how and why your information will be used and obtain explicit consent.

3. Is my information shared with anyone else?

Your personal health information may be given to other people who need to know relevant information about your health – for example a carer, a home help, or a social worker. Usually, it will only be given to them if:

- You have agreed, and
- They need it to be able to give you care and treatment.

Usually the NHS will not share your personal health information with people such as a relative, carer or friend without your permission. However, there are exceptions:

- If you are a child, and a health professional doesn't think you can make decisions about your health care, someone with parental responsibility for you may be allowed to see your records and discuss your care;
- If you are an adult who cannot make decisions for yourself, or cannot tell others your decisions, the law allows someone to see your records and discuss your care, if:
 - you have given them a power of attorney, or
 - a court has appointed someone to deal with decision making.

In these cases, the person allowed to see your health information:

- will only be able to see information that is necessary for them to make particular decisions for you about your health care, and
- will not receive information that staff feel would be harmful to your health or the health of others.

Sometimes the law allows the NHS to share your personal health information without your permission, for example, to investigate a serious crime or to protect a child. Sometimes the law requires us to pass on information: for example, notification of births and deaths. This is only provided after formal permission has been given by a qualified health professional.

4. What if I do not wish to give the Service any personal information?

You can decide how much information you wish to give; you can also use the Service anonymously if you wish. Certain information will, however, be needed for us to treat you safely. The Service also records all calls for training and quality control purposes.

5. Why do you need to know about my ethnic background?

Knowing your ethnic background helps us monitor our services more effectively and to plan services which are most appropriate to patient need.

6. How can monitoring the ethnic background of patients improve the planning and delivery of services?

Population data about Scotland provides us with information about the percentage of our local population belonging to ethnic groups. If, through our monitoring of patients, we find people from these groups are not accessing our services we can then look at why this may be happening and so we can improve the ways we plan and deliver our services. Also if we have more complaints from people from minority ethnic backgrounds we need to know so we can find out what the reasons are and find ways to address the issues.

7. Does the Scottish Ambulance Service have access to any other information about me?

Healthcare professionals in the Scottish Ambulance Service have the ability to access to your Emergency Care Summary (ECS) and Key Information Summary (KIS).

Your ECS is a summary of basic information about your health which might be important if you need urgent medical care, including:

- Name, Date of Birth, identifying number (called a CHI number) and the name of your GP;
- Any medicines which your GP has prescribed;
- Any medicines you are allergic to or react badly to.

A KIS is designed to support patients who have complex care needs or long term conditions. The following information may be included in a KIS:

- Future care plans;
- Medications;
- Allergies;
- Diagnoses;
- Your wishes;
- Carer and next of kin details.

This information will only be access by our staff if there is a medical need to do so. Whenever our staff access your ECS or KIS, a record will be kept so that we can always check who has looked at your information.

If you wish to opt out of having an ECS please inform your GP surgery.

8. How is my information kept confidential?

Everybody who works for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. For the Service, this includes the information recorded during the call, the information kept on the computer system, the electronic or paper-based records detailing your care and any verbal discussions you have with our staff.

All Service locations and staff are subject to the same data protection and confidentiality procedures.

9. Is there a law that covers the use of my information?

Personal information collected and used by the NHS is controlled by the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act contains eight principles. One of these is that information must be processed 'fairly and lawfully'. This means that you have a right to know how we intend to use the information you provide. It also means that you have a right to privacy, which is respected through any use of your personal information by the NHS.

Further information on the Data Protection Act can be obtained from:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 745
<http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

10. Can I have access to my records?

You have a right of access to the information we hold about you on our records. If you have any concerns about the accuracy of the information held please let us know.

If you want to see your health records then you should write to the Corporate Affairs Department at the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Please be aware that a charge is usually made for a copy of your records. In certain circumstances your right to see some details in your health records may be limited in your own interest or for other reasons.

11. What if I don't want my information to be used?

If, for any reason, you do not wish to have your information used in any of the ways described in this leaflet other than that required by law, please contact:

The Caldicott Guardian
Scottish Ambulance Service
Gyle Square
1 South Gyle Crescent
Edinburgh
EH12 9EB