

## **NHS Digital Collection, Processing & Analysis of Data in Connection with Covid-19**

The Secretary of State has directed NHS Digital to collect, process and analyse data in connection with COVID-19 to support the Secretary of State's response to COVID-19 and support various COVID-19 purposes set out in the COVID-19 Public Health Directions 2020, 17 March 2020 (as amended) (COVID-19 Direction) and below. This enables NHS Digital to collect data and analyse and link the data for COVID-19 purposes with other data held by NHS Digital.

The purpose of the data collection is also to respond to the intense demand for General Practice data to be shared in support of vital planning and research for COVID-19 purposes, including under the general legal notice issued by the Secretary of State under Regulation 3(4) of the Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations 2002 (COPI).

NHS Digital has therefore been requested by the joint co-chairs of the Joint GP IT Committee (JGPITC) (the BMA and RCGP) to provide a tactical solution during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic to meet this demand and to relieve the growing burden and responsibility on General Practices. On 15 April 2020 the BMA and RCGP therefore gave their support via JGPITC to NHS Digital's proposal to use the General Practice Extraction Service (GPES) to deliver a data collection from General Practices, at scale and pace, as a tactical solution to support the COVID-19 response in the pandemic emergency period.

It is a requirement of the JGPITC that all requests by organisations to access and use this data will need to be made via the NHSX SPOC COVID-19 request process, that will triage and prioritise these requests and refer appropriate requests on to the NHS Digital Data Access Request Service (DARS). NHS Digital will consult with representatives of the BMA and the RCGP on all requests for access to the data. An outline of the process for this agreed with the BMA and the RCGP is published here. Requests by organisations to access record level data from this collection will also be subject to Independent Group Advising on the Release of Data (IGARD) consideration. Data applicants will need to demonstrate they have a lawful basis to access the data for COVID-19 purposes.

### **Benefits of this sharing**

Organisations, including the Government, health and social care organisations and researchers need access to this vital data for a range of COVID-19 purposes, to help plan, monitor and manage the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will help save lives. COVID-19 purposes for which this data may be analysed and used may include:

- understanding COVID-19 and risks to public health, trends in COVID-19 and such risks, and controlling and preventing the spread of COVID-19 and such risks
- identifying and understanding information about patients or potential patients with, or at risk of COVID-19, information about incidents of patient exposure to COVID-19 and the management of patients with or at risk of COVID-19 including: locating, contacting, screening, flagging and monitoring such patients and collecting information about and providing services in relation to testing, diagnosis, self-isolation, fitness to work, treatment, medical and social interventions and recovery from COVID19
- understanding information about patient access to health services and adult social care services as a direct or indirect result of COVID-19, and the availability and capacity of those services • monitoring and managing the response to COVID-19 by health and social care bodies and the Government including providing information to the public about COVID-19 and its effectiveness and information about capacity, medicines, equipment, supplies, services and the workforce within the health services and adult social care services
- delivering services to patients, clinicians, the health services and adult social care services workforce and the public about and in connection with COVID-19, including the provision of information, fit notes and the provision of health care and adult social care services; and
- research and planning in relation to COVID-19.

Data may be analysed and linked to other data held by NHS Digital or held by other organisations to which access to the data is granted for COVID-19 purposes, through the process described above.

Data will be collected nationally from all GP Practices by NHS Digital every fortnight. All requests to access this data will be triaged through the NHSX SPOC COVID-19 request process and assessed and fulfilled by NHS Digital through DARS. This will significantly reduce the burden on General Practice at a time when demand on resources is high, enabling General Practice to focus on delivering health care and support to patients. It will also reduce compliance burden and risk for General Practice associated with sharing data and complying with the terms of the general legal notice issued under COPI, which applies to General Practices.

### **Legal Basis for this collection**

NHS Digital has been directed by the Secretary of State under section 254 of the 2012 Act under the COVID-19 Direction to establish and operate a system for the collection and analysis of the information specified for this service: GPES Data for Pandemic Planning and Research (COVID-19). A copy of the COVID-19 Direction is published here: <https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/directions-anddata-provision-notices/secretary-of-state-directions/covid-19-public-health-directions-2020>.

Details of the information to be collected can be found on the NHS Digital website – Specification of this DPN. Type 1 objections will be upheld in collecting this data from General Practices and therefore the data for those patients who have registered a Type 1 objection with their GP will not be collected. The Type 1 objection prevents an individual's personal identifiable confidential information from being shared outside of their GP Practice except when it is being used for the purposes of their direct care. The National Data Opt-Out will not apply to the collection of the data, as this is a collection which is required by law.

This information is required by NHS Digital under section 259(1)(a) of the 2012 Act to comply with the COVID-19 Direction. In line with section 259(5) of the 2012 Act, all organisations in England that are within the scope of this Notice, as identified below under Health and Social Care Bodies within the scope of the collection, must comply with the requirement and provide information to NHS Digital in the form, manner and for the period specified in this Notice. This Notice is issued in accordance with the procedure published as part of NHS Digital's duty under section 259(8) of the 2012 Act.