**Privacy notice about use of confidential data relating to the use of NHS numbers by both Adult and Community Services (ACS) and Health, Wellbeing and Children’s Services (HWCS) at Suffolk County Council**

**Introduction**

This document is a privacy notice relating to the use of NHS numbers held by both Adult and Community Services (ACS) and Health, Wellbeing and Children’s Services (HWCS) at Suffolk County Council. It has been prepared as a condition of access to this data being granted by NHS Digital.

Authorised staff in ACS and HWCS have access to records of customers receiving social care assessments or support. To ensure effective compliance now and in the future with regards to the integration of core customer data, both directorates ensure that NHS numbers are held for all customers working with their services. This minimises duplication across agencies in terms of the collection of information, and ensures that the experience for our customers and service users is as seamless as possible. The data is held in electronic format in our Case Management Systems. NHS numbers are held by the NHS Spine and the local authority will access and match our records to the spine so that it can establish the correct NHS numbers for each customer or service user. As stated, the information is used to ensure a seamless delivery of care for a customer or service user, but it may also be used for secondary statistical analysis and to help us to manage the effective delivery of statutory services in Suffolk.

**Personal information**

NHS Numbers are traced using a service call the Personal Demographic Service (PDS) linked to the spine. The individual records consist of personal information such as names, dates of birth, gender, ethnicity and postcode, and these are then matched to the appropriate NHS number, which will be retrieved from the spine and held locally on the local authority’s electronic case management system. No copies of records are made and no information is shared outside of the matching process. The process is entirely secure, with the matched records being stored within a secure case management system that can only be accessed by authorised personnel.

**Analysis of data**

In analysing data relating to our customers, the local authority may provide statistical reporting to aid management decision making, and this may contain information such as age, sex, place of residence, types and costs of services provided to customers. The analyses rules on data disclosure set by the Office for Statistics and NHS Digital are followed and, to protect confidentiality, small numbers of individuals: less than 3, are not disclosed or published, therefore ensuring that confidentiality is retained.

All data is used for monitoring the effectiveness of the local authority in supporting the local population and in planning local services. The key specific purposes are listed below:

* calculation of numbers of customers different age groups
* analysis of costs of service provision for various customer groups
* effective analysis of social care assessment processes to ensure timeliness of assessment work
* projections of potential need or causes for concern
* Identifying potential audit activity
* small area statistics
* multi-agency safeguarding audits

**Record linkage**

The NHS number is used specifically as the ‘single currency’ through which customer records are linked between health and social care agencies. This ensures that all agencies are referring to the same customer and fully understand the needs of that customer. The sharing of individuals’ data will only occur with the consent of the individual or where it is necessary to fulfil a statutory requirement e.g safeguarding service users.

**Legal basis for sharing NHS numbers**

The Care Act 2014 places an onus on local authorities and health colleagues to work effectively within a multi-agency context to safeguard service users who may be at risk of harm. The sharing of NHS numbers allows all agencies to be assured that they are referring to the same service user who may be at risk and therefore allows the local authority to discharge its statutory duty effectively.

**Opting out**

You have the right to opt out of Suffolk County Council receiving or holding your personal identifiable information as well as the use of your NHS Number within Adult Social Care at Suffolk County Council. There are occasions where service providers will have a legal duty to share information, for example in relation to safeguarding matters. The process for opting out will depend on what the specific data are and what programme they relate to. For further information, please see contact details below.

**Information Commissioner’s Office**

If you require independent advice on this privacy notice, please contact the Information Commissioner’s Office (<https://ico.org.uk/>).

**Contact details of ACS and HWCS of Suffolk County Council**

If you would like to discuss this privacy notice with either ACS or HWCS, please contact:

Roy Elmer

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