**Privacy notice about use of confidential data relating to births and deaths**

**by Department of Public Health and Protection of Suffolk County Council**

**Introduction**

This document is a privacy notice relating to individual records of births and deaths held by the Department of Public Health and Protection of Suffolk County Council. It has been prepared as a condition of access to these data being granted by NHS Digital.

Authorised staff in the Department of Public Health and Protection of Suffolk County Council have access to individual records of births to and deaths among residents of Suffolk County and individual records of deaths among registered patients in clinical commissioning groups in Suffolk. These data are in electronic format. They are produced by the Office for National Statistics and managed by NHS Digital. The births and deaths data are used by the Department of Public Health and Protection for statistical and epidemiological purposes in monitoring the health of the local population and planning local health services.

**Personal information**

The individual records of births and deaths contain personal information. The individual records of deaths do not contain names of deceased persons but each record includes NHS number, address and postcode of residence, date of birth and date of death of the deceased. The individual records of births do not contain names of mothers and babies but each record includes NHS number and date of birth of baby and usual address and postcode of mother.

Individual records of births and deaths held by the Department of Public Health and Protection are stored on the County Council network in password-protected files.

**Analysis of births and deaths data**

In analysing data relating to births and deaths analysts in the Department of Public Health and Protection usually group the individual-level data by variables of interest, such as age, sex, place of residence and cause of death. In these analyses rules on data disclosure set down by the Office for Statistics and NHS Digital are followed and, to protect confidentiality, small numbers of individuals: less than 3 births or deaths, are not disclosed.

The births and deaths data are used for monitoring the health of the local population and planning local health services. Some specific purposes are listed below:

* calculation of numbers of deaths and mortality rates from different causes and in different age groups
* distribution of births by health visitor area
* drug-related deaths audit, including deaths from alcohol misuse
* life tables
* projections of mortality rates
* proposed audit of causes of death among psychiatric patients
* small area statistics
* suicide audit

**Record linkage**

Record linkage of births and deaths data with other records is sometimes undertaken. For example, records of deaths from the Office for National Statistics have been linked with data from local drug treatment services in Suffolk to identify areas of the county where coverage by the drug treatment services could be improved.

Record linkage of births and deaths data is undertaken by staff in the Department of Public Health and Protection and these data are not circulated outside the department. Any results of record linkage shared with other agencies do not include the individual records of births and deaths from the Office for National Statistics.

**Legal basis for access to confidential records of births and deaths**

Official access to confidential records of births and deaths is in terms of section 42(4) of the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) as amended by section 287 of the Health and Social Care Act (2012) and regulation 3 of the Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations (2002).

**Opting out**

You have the right to opt out of Suffolk County Council receiving or holding your personal identifiable information. There are occasions where service providers will have a legal duty to share information, for example for safeguarding or criminal issues. The process for opting out will depend on what the specific data are and what programme they relate to. For further information, please contact the public health team by e-mail.

**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 Department of Public Health and Protection of Suffolk County Council**

If you would like discuss this privacy notice with a member of the Department of Public Health and Protection of Suffolk County Council, please contact:

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14 December 2016 Stephen Patterson

 Epidemiologist

 Department of Public Health and Protection

 Suffolk County Council