

National Data Guardian statement on the GP Data for Planning and Research programme

Press release

The National Data Guardian has issued the following statement in response to plans for NHS Digital to collect data from GP practices so that it can be used for health and social care purposes including policy, planning, commissioning, public health and research.



It is vital that data is used to improve health and care through research and planning. Information in GP records has an important part to play in making sure that researchers and planners have the insights they need to answer questions such as where services are needed and what kind of treatments are most effective.

The new system for collecting general practice data provides an opportunity to strengthen the safeguards that protect GP data and provide strong oversight of its use for planning and research of benefit to health and care.

Public attitudes research demonstrates that patients and service users are supportive of health and care data being used if certain expectations are met, including that it delivers a public benefit, that it is made clear to them what will and will not be done with the data, and what choices people have about its use. People also want to know that robust cyber security arrangements are in place to keep confidential data about them safe. The Office of the National Data Guardian has been involved since 2018 in system-wide discussions about how the new GP data collection can meet these expectations so that trust is maintained.

I am continuing to listen to and talk with patient groups and the public to inform my discussions with system leaders. My focus is on encouraging the organisations involved to work together to make it sufficiently clear to the public how data will be used and kept secure, both now and in the future. As the recently established [8th Caldicott Principle](#) makes clear, it is important

that there are no surprises for the public about how confidential information about them is used.

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