

Doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals rely on good communication with their patients and each other to provide top quality healthcare. We aim to improve this communication with a new way to share vital, personal medical information. This will improve safety and allow health professionals to make more informed decisions about your care.

In the past, there has been no way for a healthcare professional working outside of a GP practice to know about your ongoing medical conditions, or even what medication you are taking. These professionals will include those working in Accident and Emergency (A&E), an out-of-hours GP or any other doctor or nurse involved in caring for a patient. The health professional has in the past had to rely solely on the patient to supply information but sometimes the patient will be in pain, confused or unconscious or simply unable to recall relevant details.

GPs in the North Mersey area are working with local NHS care providers to implement a scheme allowing doctors and nurses in various care settings to view a limited but vital amount of the information held on GP practice computer systems. This could include medication lists, important allergies and major illnesses.

Patient safety and confidentiality are our most important concerns and patients can choose not to allow a doctor or nurse to see their medical record by saying 'no' when their permission is requested. You can also opt out of sharing any information with anybody outside your own GP practice at any time. Please discuss this with your GP.

Both you and your GP practice will need to give consent for this information sharing to occur. Only healthcare workers actively involved in your care can see your medical record summary and only for a limited time. You will be asked for consent to do this at every consultation. Every care is being taken to protect your confidentiality and all information is stored securely with no ability to copy information.

In time, the computer technology used here could be rolled out across the wider parts of Merseyside allowing other community healthcare staff, such as district nurses and hospital doctors, secure access to the medical records of the patients in their care and allowing more services to be delivered in the community, closer to patients' homes.

We have considered patient views regarding access to records, and public consultations have taken place across Liverpool and Sefton. In March 2011, patients took part in the survey called Engaging Local People in Quality. When asked the question 'Was the service prepared for you and had your records available?', 60% indicated that this was not the case – by rolling out this programme, medical records will be available at the point of care, ensuring the quality of care and the service you receive is improved.

Remember: you can opt out of sharing any of your medical information with local health care staff. Please speak to your GP if you have concerns.

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We share because we care

Allowing us to share some of your personal medical information will ensure better healthcare outside of your GP practice...



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