

The Local Health Record Network (LHRN) - Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why does my GP want to share my health records with other medical professionals in Herefordshire?

Currently individual health records are not available outside your GP's practice. If you need to seek medical care when your own GP practice is unavailable, the onus is on you to remember all the relevant details. By making your records accessible to other medical professionals you should receive a better service.

Q. Who can access my health records?

A. Each GP surgery controls access to its own patients' records. From 1st April 2014 your health records will be made available to approved, local healthcare providers via Data Sharing Agreements between the practice and the 3rd party organisation. All staff accessing your records will have undergone appropriate training and will be properly accredited.

Q. What if I don't want my information shared on the Local Health Record Network?

A. Every patient has the right to opt out of sharing their health records; this can be done by completing an 'Opt Out Request Form' which is available from your GP Surgery's Reception. Your choice is logged within the system to prevent any part of your records from being shared. Your GP should have informed you of the implications of opting out of the LHRN and that any shared data would only be seen by healthcare practitioners who are treating or due to treat you and only the areas of the record that the consulting doctor deemed relevant would be viewed.

If your GP feels that it would be detrimental to your health to exclude your records from any sharing agreements, you will be written to explaining the reasons and why they believe you should reconsider your request.

Q. If I opt out, will the LHRN still have access to my information?

A. No. If you opt out, no part of your health record will be available to any 3rd party.

Q. How can I be sure no-one is accessing my records without consent?

A. No unauthorised bodies will ever have access to your health record. The only way an individual can view a patient's record is via an individual log-on at an organisation which holds a Sharing Agreement with the patient's registered practice. Any and every type of access is tracked in the audit trail, and the individual will only be able to access the areas specifically permitted in the Sharing Agreement. On each occasion access is requested you will be asked for your consent. The only exception to this would be in an emergency when you were too unwell to give consent.

Q. Who is responsible for my records?

A. Your GP practice is responsible for your health records. To enable the LHRN to function your GP practice has delegated that responsibility to Taurus Healthcare Ltd, a local company which is wholly owned by the 24 GP practices in Herefordshire and run by local GPs. Should any serious breach of confidence occur, it would be dealt with by the police. If, for any reason, certain software was not functioning as it should, the practice server could be accessed remotely, or in person, to rectify the situation.

Q. How are my records protected?

A. Your GP practice currently uses a secure computer connection to protect your records. Similarly, access to your records through the LHRN would only be possible via what is known as 'a secure N3 connection', i.e. your data can only be accessed by authorised staff. Even then, there is an extremely high level of encryption applied to any data sent or stored which, essentially, makes any attempt to gain unauthorised access impossible.

Q. What is Taurus Healthcare's role in the Local Health Record Network?

A. Taurus Healthcare Ltd. manages the relationship between your GP practice and third parties with whom the practice wishes to share data. This involves specifying and agreeing the data content to be shared, drawing up the data sharing agreements and making data sharing arrangements available to the practice. The practice Data Controller then chooses to agree the specific data sharing agreement and switch on the data sharing process.

Q. Is there an audit trail?

A. Yes, the comprehensive audit trail tracks every record access and all changes made to the patient's health record. This includes who accessed it, which areas were accessed and when.

Q. Does being part of the LHRN put my information on the national NHS database?

A. No. The data remains under your GP practice's control. It should be noted that the LHRN is completely separate from the recently launched data collection initiative by NHS England. By including data from GP practices alongside the data it already collects from hospitals, NHS England believes that it will be possible to get a full picture of disease and treatment patterns which will help with the planning of future health services. This data will be collected anonymously and it will not be possible to track it back to individuals.

Some examples of the improved healthcare service the LHRN could bring:

1. Routine Saturday asthma review

Current situation:

- An asthma review would not be available on a Saturday

Future situation:

- Appointment booked at a Saturday clinic with an asthma nurse (for your convenience) This will likely be at a different GP premises from your current GP practice
- On arrival, you will be asked if the nurse can access your medical records.
- If you say yes, the nurse will be able to see your record (just for this appointment; you would be asked for your consent again at another appointment) and add information that your GP practice will subsequently be able to see.
- When your record is accessed, an automatic note is sent to the administrator.
- The record administration team will check that the record was accessed by a trained person and will ring a percentage of patients directly to ensure compliance.

2. Attendance at A&E

Current situation:

- Medical staff have to rely on patients and relatives for the medical history and list of medications.

Future:

- When you attend A&E, you will be asked for your consent to view your medical record.
- If you say yes, the doctor or nurse will be able to see your record (just for this visit; you would be asked for your consent again on another occasion). Initially they will not be able to add information but over time it is hoped this function will be enabled.
- When your record is accessed, an automatic note is sent to the administrator.
- The record administration team will check that the health record was accessed by a trained person and will ring a percentage of patients directly to ensure compliance.