

A guide for children and young people under 16

Confidentiality

your rights



How the health service keeps information about you private

NHS
SCOTLAND

Your parents are usually involved in your healthcare when you are young. They may make decisions for you, and speak to health workers on your behalf. But, as you get older, you have more rights. You can decide if you want your parents to be involved or not. This leaflet explains your rights once you are thought to be old enough to make decisions for yourself about your health care.

When we talk about parents in this leaflet, we also mean anyone who is your legal guardian.

If you want to talk about your health in private, and you need an interpreter, ask your health worker to arrange this for you.



Who is this leaflet for and what's it about?

If you're under 16, this leaflet is for you. It explains that health workers (doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other people that look after your health) have to keep information about you private.

This leaflet only tells you about how things work in the health service.

What does confidentiality mean?

- It means that you can talk to health workers about anything to do with your health.
- They must keep any information about you safe and private. This includes:
 - anything you say
 - information they write about you, and
 - any treatment you have had.



Sometimes health workers do need to share information about you to give you good care.

- They may share information about you with other health workers or other people who are looking after you - for example, health workers at a hospital or clinic if you have agreed to go there.



- This is to make your care safer, easier and faster.
- They will only share information that is needed to give you the best care.
- If there are particular things that you do not want to be shared, tell your health worker.

What if I talk to a health worker about:

- sex
- relationships
- pregnancy
- contraception
- drugs and alcohol, or
- feeling down?



If you want to talk about something personal - even if you are under 16 - health workers have to keep this private.

If they think something bad is happening to you, or that you are in danger, they may have to tell another adult about it to be able to help you. But even then, they should tell you they are going to do this and explain who they will tell and why.

Sometimes the law allows the health service to share information about you without you agreeing to it - for example, if you have an infection like meningitis that puts other people at risk.

What about my parents?



- Usually, health workers are not allowed to tell your parents about anything you have talked to them about unless you have agreed to this. But they may suggest that you speak to your parents or an adult you trust.
- A health worker may want to send information out to you. If you don't want your parents to see this, you can:
 - ask them to post it to a friend's address
 - say you'll pick it up, or
 - ask them not to send anything.

Remember, your parents can come with you to talk to a health worker if you want!



What if my parents want to look at my health records?

- Your health records include information about your health and any treatment you have had. Your records can be written on paper, held on computer or both.
- Usually your parents can't see your health records, unless you agree to this. If there's something in your health records that you don't want your parents to see, tell a health worker.
- If your doctor doesn't think you are able to make decisions about your health care, your parents may be allowed to see your health records without you agreeing to it. But this would only happen if the doctor thought this was best for you.

Can I see my own health records?



- Yes. You should be able to see your records in a way that you can understand. Any codes or words you don't understand should be explained to you.
- You might want to know about treatment that you've had, or check that information about you is correct.
- It's your choice whether to look at your health records.
- You might have to pay to see them. But you will be told about this.
- To find out more about seeing your health records, ask to speak to the practice manager at your GP surgery, or the records manager at the hospital.



Sometimes, people who inspect child protection services may ask to look at the records of children who have been involved with these services. This is to make sure that children are protected from harm.

These inspectors must keep your personal information safe and private, unless they think you are in danger.

What if I'm not happy?



- You may not be happy about the way health workers have used or shared your information. For example, you may think that what you've told a health worker hasn't been kept private or that something in your health records is wrong.
- If you can, tell one of the health workers who has been involved in your care about this. Or ask your parent or another adult you trust to do this for you.
- If you're still not happy, it's okay to make a complaint. The leaflet 'Making a complaint about the NHS' tells you how to do this. Ask for this leaflet at any place where you get health care, or get it on the internet at www.hris.org.uk



Need more information?

- If you are worried about confidentiality, you can phone the surgery, clinic or hospital first and check that they offer confidential advice to young people under 16.
- The Scottish Child Law Centre can give you information about your rights and how the law affects you.

Scottish Child Law Centre

54 East Crosscauseway

Edinburgh

EH8 9HD

Information helpline: 0131 667 6333

Freephone number for people under 18:

0800 328 8970

Fax: 0131 662 1713

E-mail: enquiries@sclc.org.uk

Website: www.sclc.org.uk

- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People can give you information about your rights and tell you about organisations that can help you.

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

85 Holyrood Road

Edinburgh

EH8 8AU

Freephone number for young people: 0800 019 1179

Website: www.sccyp.org.uk



- ChildLine is a free and confidential helpline for all children and young people in the UK. You can call or write to ChildLine for help and advice about anything.

ChildLine

Freepost 1111

Glasgow

G1 1BR

Freephone number (24 hours a day, seven days a week): 0800 1111

E-mail: scotland@childline.org.uk

Website: www.childline.org.uk



We have also produced a leaflet called 'Consent – your rights'. This tells you about your right to be involved in decisions about your health care and treatment. You can get this leaflet from:

- GP surgeries, dental surgeries, hospitals and any other places where you receive NHS care
- the NHS Helpline on 0800 22 44 88, and
- www.hris.org.uk



We have tried our best to make sure this leaflet is correct, but the law can be more complicated than this. If you are thinking about taking legal action and need advice, you should contact a solicitor, a citizens advice bureau, another advice agency or the Scottish Child Law Centre.



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