

# The Scottish Ambulance Service



## Patient Information and Confidentiality

Version 3

This leaflet explains why information is collected about you by the Scottish Ambulance Service and the ways in which this information may be used

## DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET:

The leaflet will be reviewed bi-annually and also updated when required taking into account any new legislation and the operational requirements of SAS.

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## **Linked Documentation:**

### **Document Title:**

#### **Scottish Ambulance Service Publications**

General Data Protection Notice

- [Scottish Ambulance Service Data Protection Notice](#)

#### **NHS Scotland Publications**

General Data Protection Notice

- [How the NHS handles your personal health information](#)

Videos

- [Privacy and confidentiality](#)

Videos with BSL

- [Privacy and confidentiality - BSL](#)
- [Introduction to Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities - BSL](#)

Leaflet

- [How the NHS handles your personal health information](#)

Webpages

- [The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Health rights in Scotland](#)
- [Privacy and Confidentiality when using the NHS](#)  
(how your information is stored shared and used)
- [Health records](#)  
(what's in your health records, how to view and access them)

Webpages for young people

- [Information for young people using NHS services - Confidentiality](#)

## **1. Why does the Scottish Ambulance Service need my personal information and what is it used for?**

The Scottish Ambulance Service provides accident and emergency services, non-emergency patient transport services, and access to urgent care services to the population of Scotland.

These services will need a certain level of information about you.

These details may include:

- Basic details about you, such as name and address;
- Medical condition;
- Current medications.

When our staff take a call, we ask relevant questions to understand, arrange, and give you the help you need. We will type answers given into our computer system and pass these on to the ambulance staff assigned to help you.

When our staff attend an incident, they will record relevant details in a patient report form. In most cases we use electronic forms but sometimes paper may be used.

NHS staff use your information to give you the care and treatment you need. They will share relevant information with other NHS staff involved in your care including your GP. This makes caring for you safer, easier and faster. For example, information is shared if:

- We take you to hospital;
- You are moved from one hospital to another;
- You need support at home such as a visit from a district nurse or falls service;
- You need to be referred to another NHS provider or service..

## **2. How else does the Service use my information?**

The Scottish Ambulance Service uses relevant patient information to help improve NHS services and the health of the public.

We may use information about you to:

- Help staff review the care they provide to ensure it is of the highest standard;
- Teach and train staff;
- Protect the health of the public;
- Provide statistics, performance and planning information;
- Find out how many people have a particular illness or disease;
- Carry out health research and development;
- Investigate complaints, legal claims or untoward incidents.

When patient information is needed to manage the wider health service, careful measures are taken to protect your privacy. Your name, address and other information that identifies you is removed wherever possible. Sometimes, though, the NHS may be unable to de-identify or anonymise patient information and still meet the purpose for using the information. If we plan to use identifiable information about you, we will usually explain how and why your information will be used and obtain explicit consent. We will always follow information and confidentiality laws, and only use patient information appropriately.

All NHS research is approved by a group of ethics experts before being carried out.

When planning any new uses of information, the Service will follow the principles of 'Privacy by Design' and assess and control changes in use. We will always use your personal information appropriately and protect your fundamental rights.

NHS Scotland groups ensure that data protection & confidentiality principles are applied to any new uses of information. These groups include:

- Public Benefit and Privacy Panel for Health & Social Care
- CHI Advisory Group
- Caldicott Guardians Forum
- Information Governance Group

### **3. Is my information shared with anyone else?**

Other people may ask us for relevant information about your health – for example a carer, a home help, or a social worker. Usually, we will only give information to them if:

- you have agreed, and
- they need it to be able to give you care and treatment.

We will only share your information where appropriate and lawful to do so, and we only pass on the minimum details needed.

There are some situations where it is so important to share information that we may do so without patient consent.

For example, the law can allow us (or require us) to share relevant information when necessary to

- help investigate a serious crime
- protect a child
- protect a vulnerable adult
- notify a birth
- notify a death

#### **4. What if I'm a child?**

If you are a child, and a health professional doesn't think you can make decisions about your health care, someone with parental responsibility for you may be allowed to see your records and discuss your care.

The person allowed to see your health information:

- will only be able to see information that is necessary for them to make particular decisions for you about your health care, and
- will not receive information that staff feel would be harmful to your health or the health of others.

#### **5. What if I'm an adult with difficulty making or communicating decisions?**

If you are an adult who cannot make decisions for yourself, or cannot tell others your decisions, the law allows someone to see your records and discuss your care, if:

- you have given them a power of attorney, or
- a court has appointed someone to deal with decision making.

The person allowed to see your health information:

- will only be able to see information that is necessary for them to make particular decisions for you about your health care, and
- will not receive information that staff feel would be harmful to your health or the health of others.

#### **6. What if I do not wish to give the Service any personal information?**

You can decide how much information you wish to give; you can also use the Service anonymously if you wish. Certain information will, however, be needed for us to treat you safely. The Service has an obligation to keep records of all services provided, and all calls are audio recorded for training, quality control and service improvement purposes.

#### **7. Why do you need to know about my ethnic background?**

Knowing your ethnic background helps us monitor our services more effectively and to plan services which are most appropriate to patient need.

## **8. How can monitoring the ethnic background of patients improve the planning and delivery of services?**

Population data about Scotland provides us with information about the percentage of our local population belonging to ethnic groups. If, through our monitoring of patients, we find people from these groups are not accessing our services we can then look at why this may be happening and so we can improve the ways we plan and deliver our services. Also if we have more complaints from people from minority ethnic backgrounds we need to know so we can find out what the reasons are and find ways to address the issues.

## **9. Does the Scottish Ambulance Service have access to any other information about me?**

Yes. Our healthcare staff can access your Emergency Care Summary (ECS) and Key Information Summary (KIS). These are summary records controlled by your GP and described below. Our healthcare staff may also be able to access other details relevant to your care if your Health Board shares these.

Your ECS is a summary of basic information about your health which might be important if you need urgent medical care, including:

- Name, Date of Birth, identifying number (called a CHI number) and the name of your GP;
- Any medicines which your GP has prescribed;
- Any medicines you are allergic to or react badly to.

A KIS is an extension of the ECS and is designed to support patients who have complex care needs or long-term conditions. The following information may be included in a KIS:

- Future care plans;
- Medications;
- Allergies;
- Diagnoses;
- Your wishes;
- Carer and next of kin details.

Our staff will only access information about you if there is a medical need to do so. If our staff access your details, a record is kept. This helps us check who has looked at your information.

If you wish to opt out of having an ECS (and/or KIS) you can inform your GP surgery, who will explain how this may affect the care you receive.

## 10. How is my information kept confidential?

Everybody who works for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. For the Service, this includes the information recorded during the call, the information kept on the computer system, the electronic or paper-based records detailing your care and any verbal discussions you have with our staff.

All Service locations and staff are subject to the same data protection and confidentiality procedures.

## 11. Is there a law that covers the use of my information?

The service owes patients a duty of Confidentiality under common law. In addition, all use of personal data is controlled by the Data Protection Act.

Our [Scottish Ambulance Service Data Protection Notice](#) describes patients' rights and how data protection law applies to our use of data about you.

Further information on the Data Protection Act can be obtained from:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Tel: 01625 545 745  
<http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

There are also many related laws, regulations, professional standards, and guidance applicable to the use of patient information. These include Human Rights laws, the Computer Misuse Act and the Security of Network and Information Systems Regulations.

Paramedics working at Scottish Ambulance Service are regulated by the [Health and Care Professions Council](#)

NHS Inform publishes a range of webpages, leaflets and videos about [Data Protection and Confidentiality in NHS Scotland](#). These include videos with BSL interpreting and webpages specifically for Young People.

The Scottish Government Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social care sets out minimum periods of time that Services should keep records for. We describe how our Service applies this Code of Practice to the different health and administrative records we keep in our [Records Retention Schedule](#).



## **12. Can I have access to my records?**

You have a right to request access to the information we hold about you on our records. If you have any concerns about the accuracy of the information held please let us know.

Our website page [Request Personal Information](#) describes how to ask for access to your information, including our ID verification process.

Please be aware that in certain circumstances your right to see some details in your health records may be limited in your own interest or for other reasons.

## **13. What if I don't want my information to be used in these ways?**

If you don't want your information to be used in any of the ways described, please tell the staff helping you or the Service Data Protection Officer.

If you have a concern or complaint about our use of your information, you can contact the Service Data Protection Officer, who is employed by the Service to ensure that we comply with the Data Protection Act -

Data Protection Officer  
Scottish Ambulance Service  
Gyle Square  
1 South Gyle Crescent  
Edinburgh  
EH12 9EB  
[sas.dpo@nhs.scot](mailto:sas.dpo@nhs.scot)

You also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office about how we use your personal information – details about this process are available on the ICO website - [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

## **14. Will the Service make automated decisions about me with the information I provide?**

We do not make any wholly automated decisions about our patients.

When you make a 999 call, we put the details you give us into sophisticated software which triages the patient's symptoms and categorises your call, based on urgency.

The medical protocols, programmed into the software, provide logic for what questions our call handlers ask you, and logic for the decision taken about how to categorise your call.

However, there are also some other factors that influence how your call is categorised

- all call handlers receive training in how to handle calls and use the software
- there are supervisors and clinically trained staff (nurses or paramedics) who call handlers can escalate complicated calls to. It is always possible for clinically trained staff to ask additional questions and increase the urgency of how your call is categorised.

Patients with time-critical, immediately life-threatening conditions (such as cardiac arrest) will receive an immediate response from the closest available crew.

Other patients will receive the most appropriate response for their clinical condition. For many patients, that will be a fast blue light ambulance. Call takers and clinical advisors will spend as long as necessary with the caller / patient to understand the patient's needs and which resource is most appropriate for the patient's condition.