Information sharing with the Home Office: Guidance for overseas patients

Why is the NHS sharing information about me with the Home Office?

You have been given this leaflet because the NHS hospital you are attending needs information on your immigration status to establish if you are chargeable for the healthcare you need and/or want.

The Home Office holds information on people living, working, visiting or studying in the UK and who are subject to visa control. The NHS sometimes needs to check with the Home Office to obtain the most accurate, up-to-date information on a patient.

The Overseas Visitor Manager (or equivalent) at this NHS hospital has shared information about you. This leaflet explains why and what will happen with the information now.

What information about me has been shared with the Home Office?

The NHS is allowed to share a patient’s **non-clinical** information securely, including:

- Full name (first name and surname)
- Aliases (if applicable)
- Date of Birth
- Gender
- Nationality
- Current address (if known)
- National Insurance number (if applicable)
- Home Office ref. number (if applicable)
- Any other reference number (for example passport number)
What will the Home Office do with this information?

The Home Office will use this information to check against its records to find out your immigration status so that the NHS can assess your eligibility for free NHS treatment. In some cases the information may be used to update Home Office records and, if applicable, may be used for the enforcement of immigration control.

Will information about my health be shared with the Home Office?

No. The only information the Home Office requires in this case is the information you have supplied to the Overseas Visitor Manager and/or another NHS organisation.

Will you share my information with the Home Office if I now refuse treatment?

Information may already have been shared. If you need (or needed) immediately necessary or urgent treatment that cannot wait, then it is important that you get this, even if charges apply.

Why do I need to provide my address?

This is necessary to help the Home Office to provide an accurate identification in a timely manner, reducing the potential for misidentification and the risks associated with this.

What protections are in place for my personal information?

All personal information held by the Home Office is stored and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998.
Will the Home Office share my information with other Government organisations?

The Home Office may share your information with the Police, the National Crime Agency and Security Service for the exercise of their functions including national security, the investigation and prosecution of crime, and the collection of fines and civil penalties.

The Home Office may also share your information with other UK Government departments such as HM Revenue and Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions for their functions. All sharing of information is undertaken in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998.

Will the Home Office sell my information to non-Government organisations?

No.

How securely will the Home Office hold my data?

The Home Office retains all information securely in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Will I be informed if the Home Office shares my information with a third party?

No, it is not necessary to obtain a person’s consent to process their personal information under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Home Office will only share personal information if it is lawful to do so and meets the conditions of this Act and the Human Rights Act 1998.
Does the NHS share my information with other agencies/bodies?

The NHS will not share your personal information without your consent unless the law permits or requires them to do so, such as for the purpose of investigating a serious crime or the collection of debts owed to the NHS. You might not be directly notified if they do this.

Why was I not asked to give my permission for my information to be shared?

According to the law, the NHS does not need to seek your permission/consent before it shares personal information such as name, address and date of birth with the Home Office. It is good practice if you are then told that your information has been shared and why.

Where can I find out more about the Home Office (e.g. data handling policy, subject access requests etc.)?

You can find out more information on the UK Immigration and Visas website (part of the Home Office): www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration.

If I have a debt to the NHS, will that affect an application that I make to remain in the UK or re-enter the UK in the future?

If you fail to pay for NHS treatment for which charges have been levied, it may result in a future immigration application to enter or remain in the UK being denied. Non-clinical data, including information on how much is owed to which hospital may be shared
with the Home Office for this purpose. You should discuss the repayment of any charge with the relevant hospital as soon as possible.

**How long will the Home Office retain my data?**

The Home Office retains information for as long as is necessary for it to perform its functions. This is in line with the Data Protection Act. Once this information is no longer of use it will be disposed of in a secure manner.