

Covid-19 mandatory data collection

On Friday 15 May 2020, GP practices in England were sent an invitation via the Calculating Quality Reporting Service (CQRS) to participate in a data collection entitled 'GPES Data for Pandemic Planning & Research (COVID-19)'.

Whilst this has been sent out as an invitation to practices via the CQRS, it is not a voluntary request and GP practices are legally required to comply with it. The data collection is set out in the accompanying Data Provision Notice (DPN) and is required to support a Direction from the Secretary of State to NHS Digital. Practices who are in scope of the notice are legally required under section 259(1)(a) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to provide this data. The DPN was notified to practices via an email to practice managers on Friday 15 May in an NHS Digital circular.

In addition to accepting the request on CQRS, practices will also need to update their privacy policy to include details of this collection and NHS Digital have produced a template General Practice Transparency Notice which GPs can use to do.

The data collection is supported by the BMA and RCGP and the DPN references that this data collection is in response to a request from the BMA and RCGP to NHS Digital to have a tactical solution for requests to GP practices for data to support Covid-19 planning and research and to release the burden from GP Practices. The BMA and RCGP have issued a full statement which is referenced in the DPN and can be found at the end of this article.

This General Practice Extraction Service (GPES) data will be extracted as an initial snapshot in time collection and then continue on a subsequent fortnightly extraction. This extraction will be reviewed in September 2020. The frequency of the data extraction may change in response to demand. The GPES data extraction will identify all patients currently registered with a General Practice or with a date of death on or after 1 November 2019 whose record contain coded information relevant to pandemic planning and research. For each patient above, NHS Digital will require the following personal data:

NHS Number
postcode
address
surname and forename
sex
ethnicity
date of birth
date of death.

Data will be extracted for the associated SNOMED code(s) and date(s) for GP record entries including:

diagnoses and findings
medications and other prescribed items
investigations, tests and results
treatments and outcomes
vaccinations and immunisations.

Type 1 objections will be upheld in collecting this data and therefore the data for those patients who have registered a Type 1 objection with their GP will not be collected. The National Data Opt-Out will not apply to the collection of the data, as this is a collection which is required by law.

The BMA and RCGP have made the following statement in support of the data collection and this statement is referenced in the DPN:

"The RCGP and BMA support this initiative. The collection set out in this DPN was designed by NHS Digital, with the support of NHSX in response to concerns raised by representatives of the GP profession regarding the current pressure on General Practice to respond to multiple requests to release data in support of COVID-19 planning and research.

"NHS Digital as the data controller for nationally extracted data will ensure that due diligence is carried out regarding any applications made to NHS Digital for access to the data that is being collected. NHSX will be responsible for a single point of contact (SPOC) COVID-19 request process that will

triage and prioritise those applications that are applicable to this data set and pass those applications to NHS Digital who will be responsible for assessing and fulfilling the applications; these applications will only be successful if they pass the appropriate ethical, legal and Information Governance requirements to ensure that data is only shared where it is secure, lawful and appropriate to do so. NHS Digital will do this through the Data Access Request Service (DARS) with advice on requests for data from this collection from the Independent Group Advising on the Release of Data (IGARD) along with consultation with profession representatives at RCGP and the BMA.

"Once this data collection has been established, all organisations, including CCGs and Integrated Care Services, are to be re-directed when requesting data from your GP practice for any COVID-19 non-direct care purposes, into the NHSX SPOC for COVID-19 requests process, thereby reducing your workload."