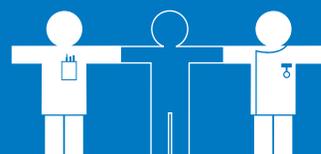




What you should know about  
***Information Governance***



# What is Information Governance?

You have probably heard of clinical governance, which is a way for organisations and individuals to continuously improve the quality of healthcare and safeguard high standards of care.

You may be aware of research governance, which defines the good practice guidelines necessary to ensure health and social care research complies with scientific and ethical standards.

Senior personnel will be involved in corporate governance, which is the way that organisations are able to achieve their business objectives and meet the necessary standards of accountability and integrity.

***Information governance sits alongside these other governance initiatives, it is to do with the way the NHS handles all organisational information, in particular the personal and sensitive information of patients and employees***

Fundamentally, it allows organisations and individuals to ensure that personal information is dealt with legally, securely, efficiently and effectively, in order to deliver the best possible care.

It provides a framework to bring together all of the requirements, standards and best practice that apply to the handling of personal information, allowing:

- Implementation of Department of Health advice and guidance
- Compliance with the law
- Year on year improvement plans

**The focus is on setting standards and giving organisations the tools to achieve these standards.**

The goal is to help organisations and individuals to be consistent in the way they handle personal information and to avoid duplication of effort. This will lead to improvements in:

- Information handling activities
- Patient confidence in the NHS
- Employee training and development

# What are the standards and requirements that make up Information Governance?

Information Governance provides a consistent way for employees to deal with the many different information-handling requirements, including:

- Information Quality Assurance
- The NHS Confidentiality Code of Practice
- Information Security Assurance
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- Records Management
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000

***Information Governance is a framework***



# Why should I learn about it?

Because Information Governance will help ensure that all employees follow best practice guidelines on information handling.

**Information Governance helps all NHS employees to manage personal information for the benefit of the patient/client.**

Your patients and clients will know that:

- their records will not be disclosed inappropriately, which will give them greater trust in NHS working practices, and
- encourage them to be more open to sharing important clinical information with you
- ensuring they receive care of the best quality

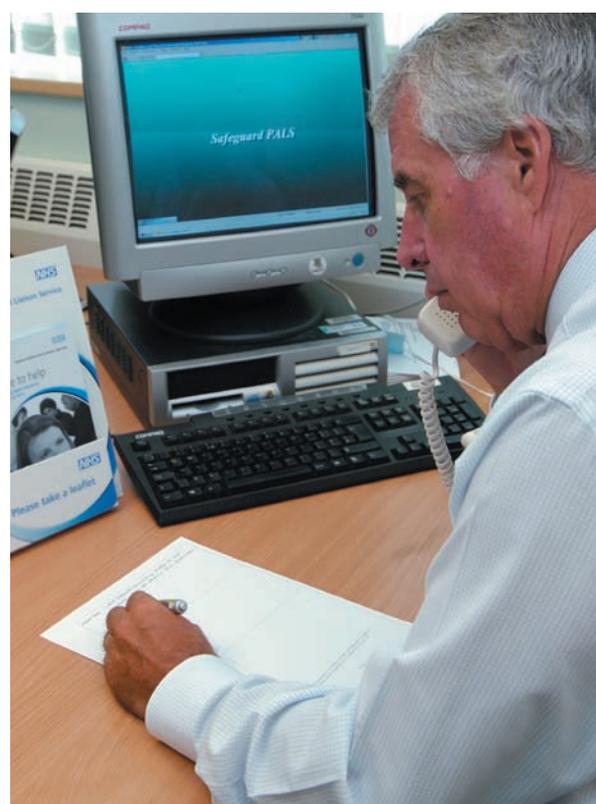
Information Governance will help ensure that all employees comply with law and best practice when handling personal information.

Training and development is a vital component of Information Governance. With proper training employees will be able to ensure that patients' information rights are respected and their personal information is used appropriately and legally.

Information Governance helps NHS employees to work with others outside of their own area and organisation.

It depends on teamwork and good communication among all staff to encourage:

- Sharing of good practice ideas across departmental and organisational boundaries
- Joint initiatives between NHS and social care organisations
- Avoidance of duplication through shared efforts



***Information Governance is the responsibility of every employee***

# Information Governance will lead to improvements in information handling

## Clear standards of information handling have been set

The Department of Health has developed standards by reference to the HORUS model, that is, information is:

- Held securely and confidentially
- Obtained fairly and efficiently
- Recorded accurately and reliably
- Used effectively and ethically
- Shared appropriately and lawfully

All the information requirements have been mapped to this model enabling organisations and individuals to more easily see where the overlaps between initiatives exist, and allow requirements to be implemented in a coherent manner.

## Management audits are performed

Audits help identify good practice and opportunities for improvement.

In a management audit of information handling, information management specialists will review the existing policies and procedures in place throughout the organisation. They will ensure that they are legal and that employees in general are aware of them. Where policies are absent or outdated, they will arrange for them to be written or updated. They will identify areas of good practice and enable them to be shared with others.

## All practices and procedures are legal

It is the responsibility of all organisations to comply with the law. By ensuring that all employees are aware of their individual responsibilities compliance is more likely.

The legality of the guidelines, policies and procedures in place will be rigorously tested. These will then be published and widely disseminated throughout an organisation.

Awareness raising sessions and training and education will ensure that all employees always practice within the law.

## Procedures are reviewed to monitor their effectiveness

Improvements or deterioration in information handling standards can be easily picked up.

Policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed and compared to the standards set. This will allow for year on year improvements to be made and any deterioration in standards to be quickly tackled.

# Information Governance can help improve patient care

## Clear guidance will be given to patients/clients, families and carers

Guidance will be made available in various formats to explain how personal information is handled and how concerns can be expressed.

Patients/clients' rights will be respected; they will be assured that their information is handled in accordance with the law. An effective and well-advertised procedure will be put into place for all to make known any concerns they have.

## Clear advice and guidance networks will be available to all employees

Organisations will ensure that there are defined reporting and investigation procedures in place.

Incidents and "near misses" should become learning opportunities, to enable employees to avoid similar problems in the future. Mandatory and on-going training will help employees to meet and maintain the Information Governance standards.



# Information Governance will involve new ways of working

## Multidisciplinary teams will work more closely together

Leading to a reduction in repetitive practices.

Duplication of information will no longer be necessary. The focus will be on sharing the information between professions, leading to:

- a single assessment process for clinical care
- joint working between IT and data protection employees
- employee time and skills put to more effective use
- less annoyance to the patient/client at having to repeat information already given

## Some working practices will change

A culture and attitude change may be necessary throughout your organisation.

Your organisation will be aware that the changes required for implementation of Information Governance may be resisted by some. To help ensure adjustments are smoothly made all employees will be:

- informed of the reasons for new practices
- aware of how changes will affect their role
- fully involved in the change process

## Greater patient/client participation

It is important that the NHS (and social care) listen to the opinions of service users and where appropriate act on those opinions.

Patient/client participation in decisions about treatment and uses of their health information will be actively sought. "User satisfaction" will be monitored, for example, by way of focus groups.

# What can you do to make Information Governance a success?

There are several general things you can do to assist your organisation:

## **Don't be afraid of change**

Information Governance merely pulls together all the information handling requirements into one framework.

## **Participate in education and training opportunities**

Take up any education and training offered to develop your awareness of your legal and organisational requirements when handling personal information.

## **Participate in management audits of Information Governance in your area**

Participation will enable you to develop and strengthen your understanding of Information Governance, and also assist your organisation to improve the way in which personal information is handled.

## **Help your team achieve best practice**

Make sure you follow the relevant procedures or processes in your organisation. Failure to do so could impact on the whole team.

## **Don't be afraid to speak up about shortcomings**

If you have any concerns about standards or practices in your department, talk with other members of your team or your supervisor or manager.

## **Ensure that errors give rise to learning**

A culture of blame is not conducive to improvement being made in this area, lessons can usually be learnt from

**shortcomings allowing good practice for the future.**

## **Share your good practice**

If you identify ways in which information handling can be improved in your work area share your ideas with your colleagues.

## **Encourage others to share their good practice**

Your colleagues will feel more valued and respected if they know that their ideas are listened to and where appropriate, action taken to implement them.

***Teamwork is the key to ensuring that all personal information is treated with respect and with regard for confidentiality***

There are also more specific actions you can take to assist the success of Information Governance:

## **Keep personal information secure**

Ensure confidential information is not unlawfully or inappropriately accessed. Comply with your organisation's computer safety procedures. Do not share your computer access password with others. Ensure you "log out" once you have finished using the computer. Do not leave manual records unattended. Lock rooms and cupboards where personal information is stored.

## Keep personal information confidential

**Only disclose personal information to those who legitimately need to know to carry out their role**

The information the care team needs to know will be different from the requirements of clerical and admin support staff. Do not discuss personal information about your patients/clients in corridors, lifts or the canteen!

## Ensure that the information you use is obtained fairly

**Inform patients/clients of the reason their information is being collected**

Organisational compliance with the Data Protection Act depends on employees acting in accordance with the law. The Act states information is obtained lawfully and fairly if individuals are informed of the reason their information is required, what will generally be done with that information and who the information is likely to be shared with. The patient/client should also be informed whether any potential use of their information is optional, e.g. for research, allowing them to opt out.

## Make sure the information you use is accurate

**Check personal information with the patient**

Information quality is an important part of information governance. There is little point in putting procedures in place to protect personal information if the information is inaccurate. NB: Under the Data Protection Act 1998 individuals have the right to request that inaccuracies in their records are corrected.

## Only use information for the purpose for which it was given

**Use the information in an ethical way**

This means that personal information which was given for one purpose, for example, hospital treatment, should not be used for a totally separate purpose, e.g. research, unless the patient consents to the new purpose.

## Share personal information appropriately and lawfully

**Obtain patient consent before sharing their information with others**

If a patient requires referral to another agency, e.g. social services, check that the patient has agreed to be referred, and is fully aware of and consents to their personal information being passed to that other agency.

## Comply with the law

**Ignorance of the law is not usually a defence for breach**

Your organisation will have spent time and money ensuring that its policies and procedures comply with the law and do not breach patient/client rights. Whilst you may not need to know what all the specific rights are, if you comply with these policies and procedures you are unlikely to break the law.

***Remember, Information Governance helps ensure all personal information is handled in compliance with law and guidance***

# Work with your patients and clients

Take steps to ensure their rights and choices are respected

## **Don't be persuaded to break the law**

**You owe a duty of confidentiality to all patients/clients, both under the common law and through Acts of Parliament.**

If anyone asks or pressures you to breach this duty discuss the issue with your manager and Caldicott Guardian. If a legitimate need to disclose without consent is identified senior personnel must make the decision. You can also contact Public Concern at Work, an independent body providing free legal advice to individuals concerned about wrongdoing in the workplace, on [020 7404 6609](tel:02074046609) or email: [helpline@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:helpline@pcaw.co.uk)

## **Communicate clearly**

**Ensure that advice and guidance you give to patients/clients is clear**

You should be able to clearly explain why you require the information you have requested, the purposes to which personal information may be put and with whom the information may be shared. If your organisation has a patient information leaflet, use it to reinforce what you have said.

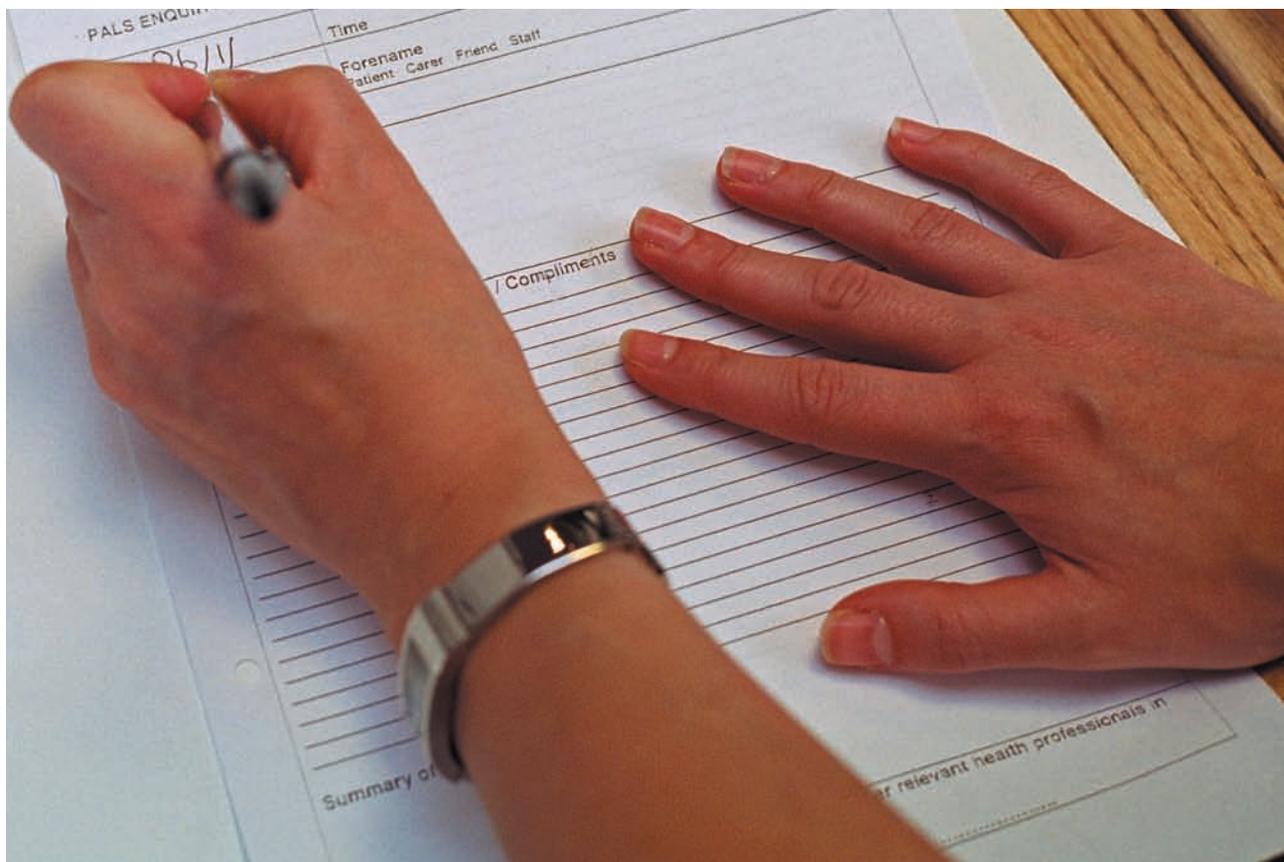
## **Encourage patients and clients to be actively involved in decisions about their care**

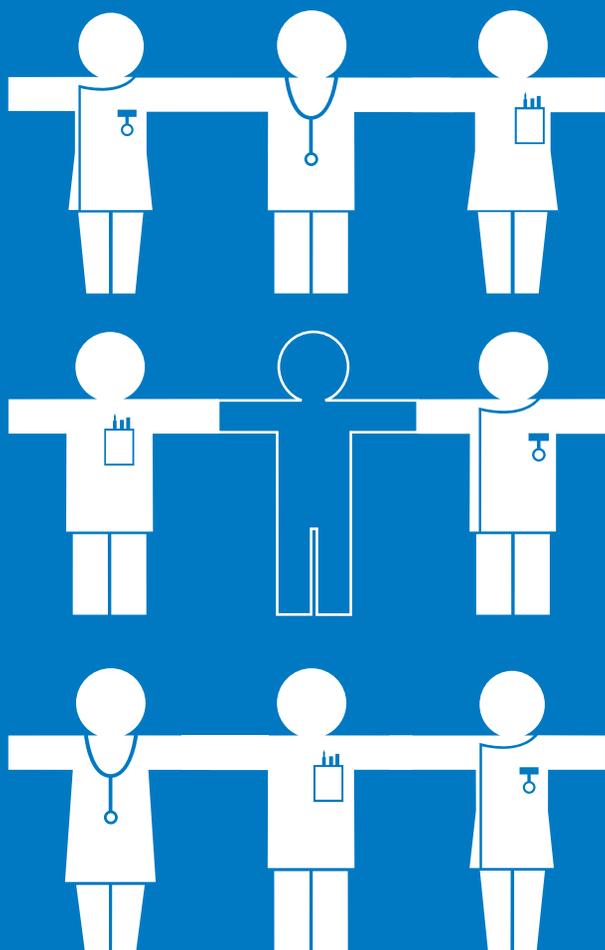
**Patients/clients have a right to be involved in decisions about the use of their information**

Be open and honest with your patients and clients, ensure they have sufficient information to make an informed decision about the use of their personal information.

# So - Information Governance ensures that personal information is dealt with legally, securely, efficiently and effectively

- Understand what Information Governance is
- Know how Information Governance applies to your role
- Do your best to improve and encourage good practices in your department
- Support information handling improvement efforts across your organisation
- Be receptive to the change process
- Be a team player
- Ensure your patients/clients are fully informed
- Take advantage of training and development opportunities





For more information about  
NHS Connecting for Health please visit  
*[www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk)*

To download further copies of this brochure, please visit  
*[www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/infogov](http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/infogov)*