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Ambulance data set briefing

Changes to the way ambulance services collect patient data

1 September 2022

Information about how patients access the ambulance services, and the care and treatment that they receive, is collected by all ambulance services as individual standalone data sets.

However, the way this information is collected, reported, and analysed varies. This makes looking at the whole patient journey time consuming and difficult.

We are now making improvements to create a national, standardised Ambulance Data Set (ADS). This new data set is developed by clinicians and will provide an improved, consistent level of detail about how ambulance services respond to and treat the thousands of calls that are received by the 999 service every day. This has never been collated consistently before. The better the data we capture, the more we can understand and the better we can commission services that improve care for patients.

The information captured will be used to achieve our ambition to deliver the very best care possible by ambulance services across England and improve outcomes for patients. We have been working with Ambulance Services to minimise the burden of data collection for our clinical staff; ensuring that there is no impact on patient care.

The data to be collected through the ADS will also be consistent with other data collections, in particular the Emergency Care Data Set (ECDS). Doing this will provide the opportunity to directly link individual ambulance records with records created in Emergency Departments, and other areas of healthcare. This will enable us to better understand patient outcomes following treatment by Ambulance Services after the patient handover to other care providers.

There is a robust information governance process to allow data to flow securely from Ambulance Services into the central NHS Digital data files before being linked and returned securely back into Ambulance Services. The ADS Programme Team have been working collaboratively across Information Governance teams in Ambulance Services and NHS Digital, as well as within NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure patient information is not compromised within the data transfer process.

The ADS Programme Team are also working with Ambulance Services to develop models of clinical feedback to ensure a consistent approach is taken within services to protect information and deliver feedback to clinicians in ways that meet

information sharing standards. Data access will be strictly governed within expanded internal ambulance service information access policies. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with Ambulance Service leads to define and develop national Clinical Supervision Models that will promote clinical development and the provision of patient data to operational clinicians in a safe, secure way. It is not intended that clinicians will be able to directly access individual patient level detail without appropriate access rights, with data safeguarding steps taken as necessary.

As part of the work with the Information Governance teams within Ambulance Services, Privacy Notices and Data Protection Impact Assessments will be also reviewed and updated to reflect the changes to the way services collect and use information. In line with current practice, patients will be able to 'opt out' of data sharing, which will generate flags with patient records used which will prevent the initial onward sharing to NHS Digital. More information on how to opt out can be found here: <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/national-data-opt-out>

Once linked, the intention is that patient data can be shared back with Ambulance Services. The benefits of this data becoming available to ambulance services include:

- Ability to identify areas of good practice.
- Gathering and comparing this data will allow individual clinicians to see where there may be opportunities to improve their clinical decision making, and thus patient care.
- Ability to identify the most beneficial care pathways for patients, improve clinical confidence and inform decisions regarding use of alternative pathways and treatments.
- Ability to understand opportunities to develop the individual and collective clinical skills needed to deliver care without the need to transport patients to alternative care providers.
- Providing an evidence base to encourage joint working with clinicians across healthcare provision to understand how the patient journey can be improved to benefit patients.

We would like to understand the thoughts and views of the patients who may use the Ambulance Service and to consider their views about our proposal. In this way we can make sure what we develop meets the needs of both the ambulance service and patients to enable us to deliver the best possible care.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the ADS Programme Team at england.ambulance@nhs.net

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