



Department of Health & Social Care

Sarah Wilkinson
Chief Executive
NHS Digital
1 Trevelyan Square
Boar Lane
Leeds
LS1 6AE

6 April 2021

Dear Sarah,

1. General Practice Data for Planning and Research Directions 2021

- 1.1. I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (**the Secretary of State**) to provide Directions to the Health and Social Care Information Centre, known as and hereafter referred to in these Directions as **NHS Digital**.
- 1.2. These Directions are given in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 254(1) and (6), section 260(2)(d), section 261(2)(e) and sections 304(9), (10) and (12) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012¹ (**the 2012 Act**) and Regulation 32 of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Constitution and Functions) and the Health and Social Care Information Centre (Functions) Regulations 2013² (**the Regulations**).
- 1.3. In exercising the activities and functions described in these Directions, NHS Digital must have regard to such priorities, policies, advice or guidance of the Secretary of State as the Secretary of State may notify in writing from time to time to NHS Digital.
- 1.4. These Directions are to be known as the **General Practice Data for Planning and Research Directions 2021** and come into force on the date signed.

¹ 2012 c.7

² S.I. 2013/259

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of these Directions (**Purpose**) is to enable NHS Digital to take significant steps towards the replacement of the General Practice Extraction Service³ (GPES) extractions with General Practice Data for Planning and Research Service to provide for the strategic collection, analysis and dissemination of General Practice data for health and social care purposes including but not limited to:
 - 2.1.1. health and social care policy, planning and commissioning purposes;
 - 2.1.2. public health purposes, including COVID-19 purposes as described in the COVID-19 Public Health Directions 2020 (as amended from time to time); and
 - 2.1.3. research.
- 2.2. The Directions also support the partial implementation of the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee⁴ as a result of the National Audit Office review of GPES⁵ to replace GPES for the collection of data for secondary use purposes.

3. Establishing and operating information systems for the General Practice Data for Planning and Research data collection

- 3.1. In accordance with sections 254(1) and 254(6) of the 2012 Act, the Secretary of State directs NHS Digital to establish and operate a system for the collection and analysis of information described in the General Practice Data for Planning and Research Requirements Specification attached at Annex A of these Directions (as the same may be updated from time to time in line with these Directions) (**the Requirements Specification**), such system to be known as the **General Practice Data for Planning and Research Information System**.
- 3.2. NHS Digital is directed to collect pseudonymised data, in accordance with the General Practice Data for Planning and Research Dataset Specification attached at Annex B of these Directions (as the same may be updated from time to time in accordance with these Directions) (**the Dataset Specification**).
- 3.3. Pursuant to the Secretary of State's powers under 254(1) and 254(6) of the 2012 Act, NHS Digital is directed to analyse the information collected pursuant and/or obtained by NHS Digital complying with these Directions, as may be requested by the Secretary of State or as NHS Digital determines is necessary to achieve the Purpose.
- 3.4. Such analysis referred to above includes:
 - 3.4.1. analysis by reference or linkage to other data obtained by NHS Digital under any other direction under section 254 or a request made under section 255

³ The General Practice Extraction Service (GPES) collects information for a wide range of purposes, including providing GP payments. It works with the Calculating Quality Reporting Services (CQRS) and GP clinical systems as part of the GP Collections service.

<https://digital.nhs.uk/services/general-practice-extraction-service>

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<https://old.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/general-practice-extraction-service-2015-16/>

⁵ <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/general-practice-extraction-service-investigation/>

of the 2012 Act, or any other lawful basis where NHS Digital is a controller⁶ of the other data;

3.4.2. analysis for data quality purposes, including undertaking comparison and consistency analysis of the same or similar information obtained through other information systems established by NHS Digital under any other direction under section 254 or request made under section 255 of the 2012 Act, and taking such steps as NHS Digital considers appropriate to maintain data quality, accuracy and consistency of information it has obtained under this Direction and across all information systems.

3.5. NHS Digital is directed to carry out the activities above in accordance with the Requirements Specification and the Dataset Specification (the **Specifications**) and generally in such a way as to enable and facilitate the Purpose described above. The Specifications may be updated periodically (within the confines of the scope set out in these Directions) by NHS Digital and agreed in writing by an authorised officer of the Department of Health and Social Care on behalf of the Secretary of State.

4. Systems delivery functions for the General Practice Data for Planning and Research Directions

4.1. In accordance with Regulation 32 of the Regulations, the Secretary of State directs NHS Digital to exercise such systems delivery functions of the Secretary of State as are necessary for it to deliver the General Practice Data for Planning and Research Information System.

4.2. NHS Digital is directed to exercise the system delivery functions in accordance with the Specifications.

5. Service Levels etc

The Secretary of State directs NHS Digital to exercise the functions described above in accordance with the service levels, support and monitoring requirements, and the reporting and governance requirements notified by the Secretary of State in writing to NHS Digital as at the date these Directions come into force, or as those requirements are amended and notified by an authorised officer of the Department for Health and Social Care on behalf of the Secretary of State in writing to NHS Digital from time to time.

6. Requirement for these Directions

6.1. In accordance with section 254(2)(a) of the 2012 Act, the Secretary of State considers that the information which could be obtained by complying with these Directions is information which it is necessary or expedient for the Secretary of State to have in relation to the exercise by the Secretary of State of his functions in connection with the provision of health services or of adult social care in England.

6.2. In accordance with section 254(5) of the 2012 Act, NHS Digital has been consulted before these Directions have been given.

7. Publication

⁶ As defined in Article 4(7) of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016

In accordance with section 260(2)(d) of the 2012 Act, NHS Digital is directed not to publish information that is specified as not for publication in the Requirements Specification.

8. Dissemination

In accordance with section 261(2)(e) of the 2012 Act, despite the restriction on publication in paragraph 7 above, NHS Digital may disseminate, under section 261(1) of the 2012 Act, the information it has obtained by complying with these Directions, where section 261(1) would otherwise not apply due only to the restriction on publication in paragraph 7, and where it would be lawful for NHS Digital to do so.

9. Fees and Accounts

- 9.1. In accordance with regulation 32(2)(a) of the Regulations, the Secretary of State may make payments to NHS Digital for things done in connection with the exercise of the systems delivery functions referred to above.
- 9.2. NHS Digital must keep proper accounts, and proper records in relation to the accounts, in connection with the General Practice Data for Planning and Research Directions 2021.

10. Duration

NHS Digital is directed to operate the General Practice Data for Planning and Research Information System and undertake the system delivery function referred to above (the **Directed Functions**) unless and until revoked by a further direction or instructed in writing by an authorised officer of the Department of Health and Social Care on behalf of the Secretary of State on reasonable notice to suspend and/or permanently cease the Directed Function. Where one of the Directed Functions is to cease, such written request will also contain a direction to revoke these Directions in accordance with the timescales and arrangements to be agreed with NHS Digital.

11. Review of these Directions

These Directions will be reviewed when the Specifications are amended. This review will include consultation with NHS Digital as required by section 254(5) of the 2012 Act.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Madden
Signed by authority of the Secretary of State

Date signed: 6 April 2021

ANNEXES – GENERAL PRACTICE DATA for PLANNING and RESEARCH DIRECTIONS 2021

Annex A – General Practice Data for Planning and Research Requirements Specification

Annex B –General Practice Data for Planning and Research Dataset Specification Template