

How your data is used by the NMPA: information for women and birthing people who are planning or gave birth in England (Fair Processing Notice)

NHS maternity units are taking part in a national clinical audit called the National Maternity and Perinatal Audit (NMPA).

What is an audit?

An audit uses data to independently examine, review and analyse the performance of a service. A clinical audit allows those providing, and the individuals using, a health service to know how their service is performing against available national standards, and in comparison to other similar services. The ultimate aim of a clinical audit is to identify changes that will drive improvements in quality of care and improve outcomes for those using the health service.

What is the purpose of this audit?

The aim of the NMPA is to study how mothers, birthing people, and their babies are cared for across England, Scotland and Wales. The NMPA makes it easier for maternity care providers to monitor and improve the care they provide. The audit includes information about all mothers, birthing people and babies for births that took place after 1st April 2014.

Who will benefit from this audit?

This clinical audit will help expectant parents and their babies by giving them access to data about services in their area, helping them to make informed decisions about their care. It will also help improve the quality of care they receive.

Maternity units receive reports comparing the quality of the care they provide with other units, and guidance about ways to improve their services. This enables them to care for women, birthing people and their babies more effectively. All NMPA reports are publically available via the NMPA website (<https://maternityaudit.org.uk>).

What information is used?

As part of routine maternity care, electronic information is already collected about all women and birthing people who use NHS maternity services. This information is used by maternity unit staff every day in the same way that paper medical records are used.

For births from 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2017, the NMPA received information from each NHS Trust about the women and birthing people and babies in their care. These data are managed securely and

confidentially by the NMPA. From 1st April 2017 onwards, the NMPA receives information from NHS England (formerly NHS Digital) with identifiers removed. The received data are '**pseudonymised**' which means we do not receive personal information such as your name, date of birth, address, postcode or NHS number.

The data are kept for the length indicated in the data sharing agreement in place with the data providers (NHSE). This is also in line with the length of our NMPA contract (currently until December 2025). Keeping the data for this amount of time gives us the chance to respond to queries relating to the data. For example, maternity units may contact us to find out more information about their results.

What happens then?

The data providers combine information from a number of different national sources. This allows the NMPA to see, for example, if you were re-admitted to hospital following childbirth. We use these (pseudonymised) data to write reports assessing maternity care at local and national levels. Combining all these data allows us to obtain a bigger picture of maternity care services and outcomes. Nothing in the reports, or the way they are used, will show any information which could lead to you or your baby being identified.

How do I know the information will be kept securely?

All information held by the NMPA is stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA 2018) and other relevant legislation. As part of our data sharing agreement, we cannot onwardly share the data we receive with other individuals or organisations. Furthermore, all of the NMPA team undergo annual training in data security and data handling.

What is the NDOO?

The National Data Opt-Out (NDOO) enables individuals to opt-out from the use of their confidential personal information for health and social care research and planning purposes.

Why were the NMPA granted an exemption?

To be effective, the audit needs information from as many women and birthing people as possible. Therefore, we submitted an application to the Confidentiality Advisory Group (CAG) to request an exemption to the NDOO. CAG is an independent group of lay people and professionals which provides expert advice on the use of confidential patient information without consent. CAG recommended that our application should be supported, and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care approved this.

This request asked that the NMPA continues to have access to the pseudonymised data from all women and birthing people and their babies, regardless of whether they have chosen to opt-out or not. As part of this application, the NMPA also included the views of women and birthing people whose data would form part of the audit.

The CAG recognised that for the NMPA, not receiving individual data from women and birthing people who have opted out of sharing their data would mean that the audit's results would not be reflective of national maternity practice, raising concerns about NMPA data relating to:

- Quality of care
- Safety
- Introduction of bias

Given recent reports on standards of maternity care, the CAG recognised the importance of maintaining high quality data in this national audit. For these reasons, the NMPA was granted an exemption from the National Data Opt-out, meaning the data from all women and birthing people who give birth in England, Scotland and Wales, and their babies will continue to be included in the audit.

What if I have questions about the use of my data, and what are my rights?

If you have any queries about the use of your data, please contact the data providers (NHS England) who collect the data and remove identifiers before sending to the NMPA. If you have queries about your data and gave birth in between 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2017 in an English NHS hospital, please contact nmpa@rcog.org.uk.

If you still don't want your data used you still have that right. You can opt-out of use of your data by visiting www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters/manage-your-choice/. All English NMPA data is received with personal identifiers removed, therefore if you wish to still not have your data used, please contact NHS England as the NMPA will be unable to see any of your identifiable information.

What are my rights when you use my data?

You also have the right to complain about the way the NMPA are handling your information. If you think there is a problem please contact us in the first instance, and if you are unhappy with our response you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office ***

*** More information about contacting the Information Commissioner's Office can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/handling/>

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