

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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STATUS: INFORMATION

CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH

Title: In support of prevention of suicide and self harm: GMC and NICE Guidance on information disclosure for the protection of patients and others.

Date of Expiry / Review n/a

For Action by:
Chief Executives, LHBs
GP Surgeries

Action required by: Immediate

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Enclosure(s): None

Dear Colleague

The purpose of this circular is to ensure that all GPs in Wales and all Local Health Boards in Wales are aware of and consider:

- The General Medical Council's (GMC) guidelines on sharing information and the consensus statement which has been agreed by the Department of Health, Royal Colleges and other partners.
- The guidance on when and how to deal with disclosures of patient information can be found in the following link [General Medical Council Confidentiality: good practice in handling patient information](#) within which guidance is outlined to assist with [Disclosures for the protection of patients and others](#)

GMC Guidelines on Sharing Information

This GMC guidance provides clinicians with support in making decisions around information-sharing where issues around the safety of the patient or others arise. The advice framework and a flowchart outline the eight principles to consider in these situations, including sections on managing and protecting information and advice on sharing information following the death of a patient.

This guidance came into effect 25 April 2017. It was updated on 25 May 2018 to reflect the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.

The guidance advises:

“All patients have the right to a confidential medical service. Challenging situations can however arise when confidentiality rights must be balanced against duties to protect and promote the health and welfare of patients who may be unable to protect themselves.” (Section 50)

In addition, the Department of Health (and others) have produced a consensus statement (**which applies to adults**) designed to promote greater sharing of information within the context of the relevant law, and to clarify that this is a matter of professional judgement for an individual practitioner providing care to an individual person. The principles of the Statement are supported in Wales:

[Consensus statement for information sharing and suicide prevention - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The situation for children and young people under the age of 18 differs, although the same duties of confidentiality apply when using, sharing or disclosing information about children and young people as about adults.

Information can be shared about a child or young person where it is in the public interest to do so. In practice, this means that practitioners should disclose information to an appropriate person or authority if this is necessary to protect the child or young person from risk of death or serious harm. A decision can be made to share such information with the family and friends, and normally would be.

NICE guidance on Self-harm

The NICE quality standard for self-harm (QS34) covers the initial management of self-harm and the provision of longer-term support for children and young people (aged 8 to 18) and adults (aged 18 and over) who self-harm.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs34>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs34/resources/self-harm-scope2>

Further information is available at:

NICE. *Self Harm Quality standard*. Available at:

[Overview | Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence | Guidance | NICE](#)

General Medical Council. *Confidentiality: Key Legislation*. Available at:

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors#confidentiality>

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/gmc-guidance-for-doctors---confidentiality-good-practice-in-handling-patient-information----70079998.pdf>

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