

Confidentiality in Sexual Health

Frequently Asked Questions

Appointment Booking Line
Tel: 0300 123 3650

Who will know that I have been to this clinic?

Only you, the nurse and/or doctor who treats you, and specialised appointment booking staff will know you have been to this clinic. If you attend another clinic in Suffolk, staff at that clinic will be able to see your attendance at this clinic. See below for information on how to opt out of this if you wish.

Where is my information stored?

Your information is stored on our highly secure computer systems used solely for the sexual health service, and in secure in-house paper filing systems.

Do I have any control over who sees my data?

Yes you do. If you wish, you may request that only staff within this clinic have access to your data. If you wish to make this choice please discuss it with the receptionist who can mark your records to ensure your wishes are followed.

If you do restrict who can see your records, it may affect how you receive your care. For example, if you tightly restrict access to your records this means that you will not be able to use the appointment booking line and you will need to call the clinic direct. This may affect the appointment times and clinic locations available to you, and restrict the service's flexibility in responding to your needs.

What if I know someone who works in the clinic and don't want them to know I am attending the service?

Call the appointment booking line on **0300 123 3650**. They will be able to book you into another clinic. All staff who work in the service, whether clinical or administrative, have an absolute duty of patient confidentiality.

Will you tell my GP?

Not unless you have been referred to us by your GP.

If you haven't, we will not share your records with your GP unless you ask us to or we need to involve your GP in your ongoing care. We would only inform your GP without your consent if there is an overriding duty of care on us to protect your partner or there is a serious public health concern.

How long will you hold my records?

The NHS determines how long records should be held and we follow its guidelines. Normally we hold records for at least 10 years (or longer if you are under 18 when you first attend).

What kind of records do you hold?

We maintain basic personal data including your name, address and date of birth and clinical records which identify any medical condition and treatment.

Do I have to identify myself?

No, you can give us a false name if you wish. However, this may impact our ability to deliver the right care to you. You need to remember the name that you have used so that your records can be accessed each time you use the service.

I work in the sex industry or as a sex worker. Will this affect the level of care or treatment I receive or my confidentiality?

No. All patients are treated equally, irrespective of their work, race, religion, sexual orientation, age or gender. All patients are entitled to the same level of confidentiality.

I'm under 16, will you tell my family?

We can still treat you confidentially whatever your age, although we do encourage you to seek support from your family and other responsible adults.

The doctor or nurse who sees you will assess whether you fully understand what is involved in your treatment and care, and are able to make informed choices and decisions. If there are very significant concerns about your wellbeing or safety, they may need to speak to someone else for advice, such as a social worker, but will only do so after attempting to discuss this with you first.

Will you tell my school?

We will not tell your schoolteachers or fellow students. Occasionally it may be in your best interests to involve the school nurse or doctor in your care, with your agreement. The school nurse and doctor are bound by the same duty of confidentiality as clinic staff in our service.

Will you contact me at all or can I just contact you?

Your registration form asks you to tell us how you wish to be contacted, and if you do wish to be contacted, how and when you wish us to do this. If you wish to, you may just contact us and choose not to receive any communication from the clinic.

If I say it is alright to contact me by phone and leave a message, what will the message say?

The message will not identify the clinic or the service, and will not leave any clinical information on your answerphone. The caller will leave a number at which to contact our service. The exact content will depend on what needs to be communicated.

I know someone who works at the hospital. Will they know that I have been here?

No. Your attendance at this clinic and your clinical records are not shared with other services provided by the clinic, hospital or GPs.

Will my employer know that I have been here?

No.

Will my insurance company or mortgage company be able to find out that I have been here?

Only if you tell them.

Can you help me talk to my partner/family/friend or contact them on my behalf about why I am here?

Yes, if you wish. Please discuss this with the doctor or nurse. We can independently contact sexual partners for you without saying who has asked for this to happen.

If someone has a sexually transmitted infection, it is important to treat the people they have had sex with recently, to stop the person from being re-infected and to protect the health of those other people.

In some cases it's also important to contact people they have had sex with in the past, to protect their health and to prevent the infection being passed on to their future sexual partners.

Will my information be transmitted outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)?

No. Your information is covered by the Data Protection Act (1998) which prohibits your information being transferred outside of the EEA without you being notified first.

Will my information be transferred outside of the NHS?

A company called Suffolk Integrated Healthcare (SIH) Ltd works with the NHS to manage service provision of sexual and reproductive health care in Suffolk. Staff from SIH provide the central appointment booking system. They will take your basic personal data to book an appointment for you. SIH will not be able to hold or view your clinical records unless responding to correspondence from you. If SIH needs to do this, only an appropriately trained clinical manager from SIH will be able to view your record.

SIH and the Suffolk NHS will use information from your attendance to help improve the service, but this will not include your personal or medical details. Your identity cannot be determined from the information used for this purpose.

Will you sell my data?

No.

Can I see a copy of my records?

Yes. The Data Protection Act (1998) allows you to request all records held about you. This is called a **subject access request**. You need to tell us in writing that you wish to see a copy of all records held about you and we have up to 40 days to respond to the request.

Please note: To comply with the Data Protection Act (1998), records cannot be asked for 'over the counter'. Your request must be in writing and you must provide proof of your identity. There may be a fee for providing copy records.

Can I change my records?

If the details we hold about you are wrong then you can ask to have those corrected.

If another person tries to confirm whether I have been here, will you tell them?

No.

How do you protect my information?

We operate strict procedures to safeguard against access to your information. We achieve this by using physical and electronic methods, and by our staff adhering to strict codes of conduct and confidentiality.

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