



PHE: NDTMS – what we do, how we use personal information, and your options

This leaflet explains what the Public Health England (PHE) National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) is, and why we need information about people's drug and alcohol treatment. It also explains who we share information with, how we protect the information we use, and what your options are with regard to any information we may hold about you.

What NDTMS is and does

Whenever somebody receives treatment from a drug or alcohol misuse service in England, the health worker concerned records a range of personal information to ensure that the best possible care is provided.

As long as the users of treatment services have given their consent, some of this information is shared with PHE and collected by NDTMS.

NDTMS helps PHE look at the number of people using these treatment services, and how effective they are at helping people with substance misuse issues.

How NDTMS is managed

NDTMS transferred from the former National Treatment Agency to PHE on 1 April 2013. PHE's role is to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We are an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. We are not part of the NHS but work closely alongside it.

You can find information on what PHE does at:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england

You can find details here on the range of information we use:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/about/personal-information-charter

What information NDTMS uses and why

PHE is responsible for monitoring drug and alcohol treatment services across England.

NDTMS collects some personal information about the people using these services, including their initials, date of birth, gender, local authority area of residence, and the first part of their postcode. Some local services also provide us with full postcodes but this only ever happens with the permission of the people being treated.

NDTMS never collects full names and addresses, it never contacts service users, and it does not pass any personal information to the police.

The information collected on the number of service users, the types of substances they use, the treatment they receive, and how long they spend in treatment is used to:

- monitor how effective alcohol and drug treatment services are
- plan and develop services that best meet local needs
- produce statistics and support research about drug and alcohol use and treatment

PHE and NDTMS never publish any information that could be used to directly identify individual users of drug and alcohol treatment services.

How NDTMS protects the information it uses

The information NDTMS collects is held with the permission of the people who use drug and alcohol treatment services.

PHE staff are bound by clear legal and professional obligations to protect the confidentiality of the information they collect and use. As well as limiting the amount of personal information we hold, we make sure that our staff can only see the information that is essential for them to do their job.

Who NDTMS shares information with and why

To help PHE understand more about how effective drug and alcohol treatment services are at helping people with substance misuse issues, the information we collect is sometimes shared with organisations that carry out work on our behalf.

Information from NDTMS is shared with the National Drug Evidence Centre, based at the University of Manchester, which publishes regular statistics on drug and alcohol use and treatment on behalf of PHE.

You can find out more at:

www.population-health.manchester.ac.uk/epidemiology/NDEC

We also work with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Ministry of Justice, and the Health and Social Care Information Centre to understand more about drug and alcohol services users before, during and after their treatment and to ensure that their health and other needs are being met.

To do this, we link records from NDTMS with other sources of information. We link to hospital records to understand more about the health needs of people with substance misuse issues. We also link to benefits claims records to help improve employment opportunities for those in treatment and we link to records from the Police National Computer to be able to demonstrate the impact that substance misuse treatment has on crime.

This linkage is always done by PHE to ensure that the confidentiality of the users of drug and alcohol treatment services is protected at all times. At no point is any information that could be used to identify individual service users shared with these government departments.

We also sometimes share information from NDTMS with researchers from other organisations such as universities. This is so we can understand more about the needs of substance misusers and what works to help them. We only share information from NDTMS that the law allows us to, and always in a way that ensures the confidentiality of drug and alcohol treatment service users is protected.

How to find out if NDTMS holds any information about you

To find out if we hold any personal information about you, you can write to us at the following address: Head of Public Accountability, Public Health England, Wellington House, 133–155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG or by email at FOI@phe.gov.uk

Your personal information and your rights

If you are or have been, a user of drug and alcohol services, no information about you and your treatment can be passed to NDTMS without your permission.

If you are currently being treated for a substance misuse issue and do not want your information included on NDTMS, this will not have any effect on the treatment you receive.

The law gives you the right to object to PHE holding personal information about you. We hope that in explaining the important reasons why we use personal information, and the careful steps we take to protect confidentiality, you will not wish to have any information that we may hold about you removed from NDTMS.

If you do decide that you want your information removed, you can either speak to your key worker or contact us directly at the following address: Head of Public Accountability, Public Health England, Wellington House, 133–155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG or by email at FOI@phe.gov.uk

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