



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Public Health England: National Drug and alcohol Treatment Monitoring System – what we do, how we use personal information, and your options

This leaflet explains what the Public Health England (PHE) National Drug and alcohol 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 regards to any information we may hold about you.

What NDTMS is and does

Whenever somebody receives treatment from a drug or alcohol 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 in a database called the National Drug and alcohol Treatment Monitoring System (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 is managed by PHE, the national expert agency for public health. PHE's role is to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. PHE is not part of the NHS but works closely alongside it.

You can find information about what PHE does at:

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

You can also find further details about the information PHE uses to do its job here: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/about/personal-information-charter

What information NDTMS uses and why

PHE is responsible for looking at the number of people using drug and alcohol treatment services across England. It also looks at how good these services are at helping people with drug and alcohol problems with the aim of making sure everyone receives the best treatment possible.

To help with this, NDTMS collects some personal information about the people using these services, including their initials, date of birth, gender, the local authority area in which they live, and the first part of their postcode. This information is only ever shared with PHE if the people using these treatment services agree.

NDTMS never collects full names and addresses. It never contacts service users, and it does not pass any personal information to the police or any other organisation. The information is 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 drug and alcohol treatment services are
- support the improvement of outcomes for service users
- 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 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 law to protect the confidentiality of the information they collect and use. As well as keeping the amount of personal information we hold to the minimum we need, 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 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 uses the data to publish regular statistics on drug and alcohol use and treatment on behalf of PHE.

You can find out more at:

research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/epidemiology/NDEC

We also link NDTMS records with other sources of information to understand more about drug and alcohol service users before, during and after their treatment to ensure that their health and other needs are being met.

Some examples of the other data sources that NDTMS is linked to are described below:

We link to hospital records to understand more about the health needs of people with substance misuse issues. This information is provided by NHS Digital.

We also link to benefits claims records to help improve employment opportunities for those in treatment. This information is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.

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 information is provided by the Ministry of Justice.

These data linkages are always done by PHE to ensure that the confidentiality of the users of drug and alcohol treatment services is protected at all times. No information that could be used to identify you is shared with these government departments or other organisations and only a very small number of people working in PHE ever see this linked data.

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 shared with 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.

You have 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

If you have concerns about how PHE may have used personal information about you, you can write to the PHE Data Protection Officer at the same address.

You can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office if PHE has not been able to address any concerns you have. Information on how to contact the ICO can be found here ico.org.uk/concerns or you can call 0303 123 1113.

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