

Data Provision Notice

KO41b Primary Care Complaints data collection

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Contents

Background	3
Purpose of the collection	3
Benefits of the collection	3
Legal basis for the collection, analysis, publication and dissemination	4
Persons consulted	4
Scope of the collection	5
Form of the collection	5
Manner of the collection	6
Period of the collection	6
Data quality	6
Burden of the collection	7
Steps taken by NHS Digital to minimise the burden of collection	7

Background

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 (the Act) gives the Health and Social Care Information Centre, now known as [NHS Digital](#) and hereafter referred to by this name, statutory powers, under section 259(1)(a), to require data from health or social care bodies, or organisations that provide publicly funded health or adult social care in England, where it has been directed to establish an information system by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care or NHS England.

The data, as specified by NHS Digital in this published Data Provision Notice, is required to support a direction from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to NHS Digital. Therefore, organisations that are in scope of the notice are legally required, under section 259(5) of the Act, to provide the data in the form and manner specified below.

This data collection has been operational since April 1997 and covers complaints made to General Practices, Dental Practices and NHS England and NHS Improvement. It was paused in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic and is now being re-launched, using a new, more user friendly data collection tool in General Practice. Public consultation took place at the end of 2020 to review the content of the collection, subsequently some changes have been made to the collection.

Purpose of the collection

Recording, managing and resolving complaints is a part of modern service delivery and provides important feedback for service improvement. The data that is collected nationally serves multiple purposes, for example it enables national bodies, such as NHS England, to discharge their respective legal duties and responsibilities in listening and responding to public voice on the NHS. It also helps with focusing improvement and support to the NHS including providers of NHS funded services.

Published National Statistics data then gives the readership a transparency regarding the volumes and types of complaints being received at GP and Dental practices.

Data is collected on an annual basis, with the 2020-21 collection year seeing the collection transition to a web-based collection tool from a spreadsheet in previous years for general practice. The tool can be accessed from [this page](#) when the collection is live.

Data and related commentary are [published as an Official Statistic](#) on NHS Digital's website and are used by commissioners to evaluate trends in complaints within their area. They also help to inform the public of complaints volumes within the sector and occasionally are used to answer parliamentary questions and requests for information.

Benefits of the collection

The collected data is used to deliver a number of benefits to the NHS:

- long-term monitoring of complaint volumes and types
- identification of specific type of complaints, which can lead to service improvements
- enables national bodies discharge their respective legal duties and responsibilities in listening and responding to public voice on the NHS

- inform public opinion in providing feedback that complaints are logged, assessed and resolved
- provide commissioners with data to target areas for improvement.

Legal basis for the collection, analysis, publication and dissemination

NHS Digital has been directed by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care under section 254 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012; to establish and operate a system for the collection and analysis of the information specified for this service. A copy of the Direction is published here:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/directions-and-data-provision-notices/secretary-of-state-directions/workforce-information-directions-2019>

Details about the complaints made to relevant NHS organisations in England are required by NHS Digital under section 259(1)(a) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Therefore, in line with section 259(5) of the Act, all organisations in scope, in England, must comply with the requirement and provide information to NHS Digital in the form, manner and period specified in this Data Provision Notice.

This Notice is issued in accordance with the procedure published as part of NHS Digital duty under section 259(8).

GDPR compliance for collection and analysis is under the following Articles:

- Article 6(1)(c) – Legal Obligation – by virtue of above Direction under s254 of 2012 Act.
- Article 9(2)(g) – substantial public interest, plus Part 2 Sched 1 DPA18, para 6 statutory and governmental purpose re Direction.

Article 14 of GDPR applies in relation to transparency as data is not collected directly from the data subject and the Fair Processing Notice will be updated in line with this Article.

Analysed data are disseminated and published in line with National Statistics protocols. Published data and any requests for additional analysis will be made available on NHS Digital's website.

Persons consulted

Following receipt of a direction to establish a workforce information system, part of which requires a collection of NHS complaints, NHS Digital has, as required under section 258 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, consulted with the following persons to develop and implement these requirements:

- Workforce Statistics Assistant Director at Department of Health and Social Care
- GP Burden and Bureaucracy Assessment Team, NHS England and NHS Improvement
- Regional and National Complaints Commissioners, NHS England and NHS Improvement

- Other bodies consulted include:
 - Data submitters (GP and Dental practices) via open consultation.

There were 91 respondents to the consultation, the results of which can be found [here](#).

Scope of the collection

Under section 259(1)(a) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, this Notice is served in accordance with the procedure published as part of the NHS Digital duty under section 259(8) on the following persons:

- Dental Practices
- GP Practices
- NHS England

Under section 259(5) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 the organisation types specified in the above Scope must comply with the Form, Manner and Period requirements below.

Form of the collection

Data are collected from organisations in aggregated format only, no patient or staff level identifiable items form part of the collection. The data items and types are listed below.

Organisation Details and Summary Information	Organisation Code	Varchar (10)
	Organisation Name	Varchar (255)
	Total Brought Forward	Integer
	Total New	Integer
	Total Resolved	Integer
	Number Upheld	Integer
	Number Partially Upheld	Integer
	Number Not Upheld	Integer
	Total Carried Forward	Integer
Age of patient by or on behalf of whom the complaint is made	0-19	Integer
	20-59	Integer
	60 and above	Integer
	Unknown	Integer
	Total all ages	Integer
Status of complainant	Patient/Parent/Guardian	Integer
	Carer	Integer
	Other	Integer
	Total	Integer
Subject Area	Circa 40 Categories, examples as below	
	Appointment (Obtaining inc 0844 numbers)	Integer
	Appointment Availability/Length	Integer
	Care Planning	Integer
	Charging/ Costs	Integer
	Clinical Treatment (inc Errors)	Integer

	Communications	Integer
Staff Group	7 Staff Groups, examples as below	
	Healthcare Assistant	Integer
	Locum Practitioner	Integer

Guidance documentation along with detailed specifications as above for organisations submitting data are made available on the following webpage and will be updated on an annual basis:

[KO41b Primary Care \(GP and Dental\) Complaints Collection - NHS Digital](#)

Manner of the collection

Submitting organisations are required to complete an annual return. Data submitted by GP Practices and NHS England are submitted to NHS Digital's web collection tool. Data from Dental Practices are collected on behalf of NHS Digital by NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA). Both are web-based collection tools and the questions asked are identical (except for references to GP / Dental as appropriate).

Submission guidance is available on the following webpage: [KO41b Primary Care \(GP and Dental\) Complaints Collection - NHS Digital](#)

Period of the collection

Key data collection dates and (where known) data publication details are as defined below

- Collection opens 9th August 2021 – data can be submitted from this point onwards
- Collection closes 29th October 2021 (open for 12 weeks).

Data collected covers the previous financial year. For example, data collected above will cover the period April 2020 to March 2021.

Publication timetables are yet to be confirmed. Once confirmed these will be added to the webpage above.

Data quality

Given the aggregated nature of the data, a huge range of data quality checks are not necessary. However, there are some key validations that are carried out to ensure the integrity of the data set is maintained. In the main these include;

- correlation against previous years complaints, for:
 - volumes
 - complaint types
 - organisational details
- checking whether totals match aggregated component parts
- checking that totals are consistent across each category of aggregation
- checks that values submitted match the listed data item types.

For 2020-21, for the general practice collection, validation will be carried out post-collection with at source validation being introduced from 2021-22. Data relating to dental practices collected by NHS BSA will be subject to both validation at source and post-collection for 2020-21.

Burden of the collection

Steps taken by NHS Digital to minimise the burden of collection

In discharging its statutory duty to seek to minimise the burden it imposes on others NHS Digital has consulted with users during 2021 to assess the burden of this collection. This resulted in:

- moving to an online, forms-based collection tool from Excel Spreadsheet-based collection
- removing a question from the previous collection
- lengthened the collection window from 6 to 12 weeks
- condensed some collection category types to reduce items submitted.

In seeking to minimise the burden it imposes on others, in line with sections 253 (2a) and 265(3) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, NHS Digital has an assessment process to validate and challenge the level of burden incurred through introducing new information standards, collections and extractions.

This process is carried out by the Data Standards Assurance Service (DSAS) which assures burden assessment evidence as part of the overarching Data Alliance Partnership Board (DAPB) approval process. The DAPB, acting under authority of the Secretary of State, oversees the assurance, approval and publication of information standards and data collections for the health and social care system in England.

This collection is being assured by the DAPB and the burden assessment results will be included in a future release of this Notice. Any questions about the burden assessment can be sent to DSAS via standards.assurance@nhs.net.

For further information

www.digital.nhs.uk

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