



# Department of Health & Social Care

Department of Health and Social  
Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0EU

Sarah Wilkinson  
Chief Executive  
NHS Digital  
1 Trevelyan Square  
Boar Lane  
Leeds  
LS1 6AE

12<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Sarah

## 1. **Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions 2021**

- 1.1 I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (**the Secretary of State**) to provide Directions to the Health and Social Care Information Centre, known as and hereafter referred to in these Directions as **NHS Digital**.
- 1.2 These Directions are given in exercise of the powers conferred by section 254(1) and (6), section 260(2)(d), section 261(2)(e) and section 304(9), (10) and (12) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012<sup>1</sup> (**the 2012 Act**).
- 1.3 In exercising the activities and functions described in these Directions, NHS Digital must have regard to such priorities, policies, advice or guidance of the Secretary of State as the Secretary of State may notify in writing from time to time to NHS Digital.
- 1.4 These Directions are to be known as the **Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions 2021** and come into force on the date signed.

## 2. **Purpose**

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 c.7

- 2.1 The purpose of these Directions (**Purpose**) is to enable NHS Digital to collect and analyse information on the prevalence of both treated and untreated psychiatric disorders in the population (adults, young people, and children) in England. The information obtained will inform policy development, assist with the planning of services, and support the monitoring of trends and changes in the nation's mental health and wellbeing and the services available.
  - 2.2 Information about the mental health of adults, children or young people living in England will be collected from a representative sample of the general population via the **Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys**, for example, via the Mental Health of Children and Young People's Surveys (also known as the National Study of Health and Wellbeing: Children and Young People) and the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Surveys (also known as the National Study of Health and Wellbeing). These Directions also cover the collection and analysis by NHS Digital of historic data obtained from previous Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys commissioned by the Secretary of State between 1993 and 2020.
3. **Establishing and operating information systems for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions data collection**
- 3.1 In accordance with sections 254(1) and 254(6) of the 2012 Act, the Secretary of State directs NHS Digital to establish and operate such systems for the collection and analysis of Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys information described in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions Requirements Specification attached at Annex A of these Directions (as may be amended) (**the Specification**), such system to be known as the **Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions Information System**.
  - 3.2 For the avoidance of doubt, the collection referred to in paragraph 3.1 and further specified in the Specification includes:
    - 3.2.1 a one-off collection of historic data obtained from previous Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys commissioned by the Secretary of State between 1993 and 2020; and
    - 3.2.2 new information to be obtained as a result of any Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys commissioned pursuant to these Directions.
  - 3.3 NHS Digital is directed to carry out the activities above in accordance with the Specification and generally in such a way as to enable and facilitate the Purpose described above. The Specification may be updated periodically (within the confines of the scope set out in these Directions) by NHS Digital and agreed in writing by the Secretary of State.
4. **Analysis and linkage**

4.1 Pursuant to the Secretary of State's powers under 254(1) and 254(6) of the 2012 Act, NHS Digital is directed to:

4.1.1 analyse and link datasets already obtained by NHS Digital under other directions pursuant to section 254, including from the personal demographics service, with publicly accessible information, including the Post Code Address File, in order to create sampling datasets from which participants will be selected and invited to take part in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys;

4.1.2 the information collected pursuant to these Directions, including by such reference or linkage to other data held by NHS Digital as NHS Digital determines is necessary to achieve the Purpose.

## 5. Requirement for these Directions

5.1 In accordance with section 254(2)(b) of the 2012 Act, the Secretary of State considers it to be in the interests of the health service in England or of the recipients or providers of adult social care in England for the Directions to be given.

5.2 In accordance with section 254(5) of the 2012 Act, NHS Digital has been consulted before these Directions have been given.

## 6. Publication

In accordance with section 260(2)(d) of the 2012 Act, NHS Digital is directed not to publish information that is specified as not for publication in the Specification. Any other information must be published in line with NHS Digital's duty under section 260(1) of the 2012 Act unless it falls within section 260(2) of the 2012 Act.

## 7. Dissemination

Any information collected or otherwise obtained as a result of these Directions may be disseminated in line with NHS Digital's powers under section 261 of the 2012 Act, including under section 261(1) as permitted by section 261(2)(e), despite the prohibition in paragraph 6.

## 8. Fees and Accounts

NHS Digital must keep proper accounts, and proper records in relation to the accounts, in connection with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions 2021.

## 9. Duration

NHS Digital is directed to operate the Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions Information System (the **Directed Function**) unless and until revoked by a further direction or instructed in writing by an authorised officer of the Department of Health and Social Care on behalf of the Secretary of State on

reasonable notice to suspend and/or permanently cease the Directed Function. Where the Directed Function is to cease, such written request will also contain a direction to revoke these Directions in accordance with the timescales and arrangements to be agreed with NHS Digital.

#### **10. Review of these Directions**

These Directions will be reviewed when the Specification is amended. This review will include consultation with NHS Digital.

Yours sincerely



Zoe Seager,  
Deputy Director, Mental Health Policy and Delivery  
Signed by authority of the Secretary of State

## **ANNEXES - MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEYS DIRECTIONS 2021**

### **Annex A - Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveys Directions Requirements Specification**