

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE POLICY

1 SUMMARY

Information is a vital asset, both in terms of the clinical management of individual patients and the efficient management of services and resources. It plays a key part in clinical governance, service planning and performance management.

It is therefore of paramount importance to ensure that information is efficiently managed, and that appropriate policies, procedures and management accountability and structures provide a robust governance framework for information management.

2 PRINCIPLES

The Trust recognises the need for an appropriate balance between openness and confidentiality in the management and use of information. The Trust fully supports the principles of corporate governance and recognises its public accountability, but equally places importance on the confidentiality of, and the security arrangements to safeguard, both personal information about patients and staff and commercially sensitive information. The Trust also recognises the need to share patient information with other health organisations and other agencies in a controlled manner consistent with the interests of the patient and, in some circumstances, the public interest.

The Trust believes that accurate, timely, and relevant information is essential to deliver the highest quality health care. As such it is the responsibility of all clinicians and managers to ensure and promote the quality of information and to actively use information in decision making processes.

There are 4 key interlinked strands to the information governance policy:

- Openness
- Legal compliance
- Information security
- Quality assurance

2.1 Openness

- Non-confidential information on the Trust and its services should be available to the public through a variety of media, in line with the Trust's code of openness
- The Trust will establish and maintain policies to ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act
- The Trust will undertake or commission annual assessments and audits of its policies and arrangements for openness
- Patients should have ready access to information relating to their own health care, their options for treatment and their rights as patients
- The Trust will have clear procedures and arrangements for liaison with the press and broadcasting media
- The Trust will have clear procedures and arrangements for handling queries from patients and the public

2.2 Legal Compliance

- The Trust regards all identifiable personal information relating to patients as confidential

- The Trust will undertake or commission annual assessments and audits of its compliance with legal requirements
- The Trust regards all identifiable personal information relating to staff as confidential except where national policy on accountability and openness requires otherwise
- The Trust will establish and maintain policies to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act, Human Rights Act and the common law confidentiality
- The Trust will establish and maintain policies for the controlled and appropriate sharing of patient information with other agencies, taking account of relevant legislation (e.g. Health and Social Care Act, Crime and Disorder Act, Protection of Children Act)

2.3 Information Security

- The Trust will establish and maintain policies for the effective and secure management of its information assets and resources
- The Trust will undertake or commission annual assessments and audits of its information and IT security arrangements
- The Trust will promote effective confidentiality and security practice to its staff through policies, procedures and training
- The Trust will establish and maintain incident reporting procedures and will monitor and investigate all reported instances of actual or potential breaches of confidentiality and security

2.4 Information Quality Assurance

- The Trust will establish and maintain policies and procedures for information quality assurance and the effective management of records
- The Trust will undertake or commission annual assessments and audits of its information quality and records management arrangements
- Managers are expected to take ownership of, and seek to improve, the quality of information within their services
- Wherever possible, information quality should be assured at the point of collection
- Data standards will be set through clear and consistent definition of data items, in accordance with national standards.
- The Trust will promote information quality and effective records management through policies, procedures/user manuals and training

2.5 Responsibilities

It is the role of the Trust Board to define the Trust's policy in respect of Information Governance, taking into account legal and NHS requirements. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that sufficient resources are provided to support the requirements of the policy.

The Information Governance Steering Group is responsible for overseeing day to day Information Governance issues; developing and maintaining policies, standards, procedures, and guidance, coordinating Information Governance in the Trust and raising awareness of Information Governance.

Managers within the Trust are responsible for ensuring that the policy and its supporting standards and guidelines are built into local processes and that there is on-going compliance.

All staff, whether permanent, temporary or contracted, and contractors are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the requirements incumbent upon them and for ensuring that they comply with these on a day to day basis.

1. Policy Approval

Brent PCT acknowledges that information is a valuable asset, therefore it is wholly in its interest to ensure that the information it holds, in whatever form, is appropriately governed, protecting the interests of all of its stakeholders.

This policy, and its supporting standards and work instruction, are fully endorsed by the Board through the production of these documents and their minuted approval.

I trust that all staff, contractors, and other relevant parties will, therefore, ensure that these are observed in order that we may contribute to the achievement of the [insert organisation type] objectives and the delivery of effective healthcare to the local population.

Chief Executive:



Date

14/2/08
