Connecting your Care

Health Care Providers - Frequently asked questions

What is Connecting your Care?

The Connecting your Care programme is a way of bringing together shared datasets between health and care services in South West London and surrounding areas. It provides health and care professional with a "virtual" view of aggregated patient information, in real-time, accessed directly from your local record system.

It is to be used for the purposes of "direct care" only (e.g. when you are directly engaged in providing services for a patient or service user). It brings together information you would otherwise have to phone or email partner organisations for. It is not used for research or population risk stratification.

Why is Connecting your Care important?

Connecting your Care becomes a powerful tool for use in your day to day interactions with your patients and service users, giving you access in real time, at point of care to critical information that can inform your assessment and treatments plans.

The information available to you via the Connecting your Care view is also a snapshot in real time of the most current information held for your patient/service user in each of those partner systems. Without access to Connecting your Care, much of this information would need to be collected via other much less secure means, such as phone/email.

Is Connecting your Care the same as the Health Information Exchange (HIE)?

Connecting your Care is the name of the Programme we are delivering in South West London to connect up health and care providers. But you might also see/hear it referred to as 'the HIE' – which stands for Health Information Exchange. The HIE is the software platform that delivers the Connecting your Care view. In some nationally used systems (such as EMIS) the link to the shared information will be called HIE rather than the local programme name Connecting your Care because HIE is simply the generic name for a sharing platform and EMIS/other systems need to enable a link to multiple health information exchanges across the country.

How will Connecting your Care benefit me?

The Connecting your Care view is used to enhance the patient or service user assessment process. Immediate access via a secure electronic pathway to the shared information from other providers where the patient/service user has existing records will help you in your assessment and treatment workflows.

The Connecting your Care view shares information from GP records, acute trusts, mental health, community and social care records in South West London, and GP and acute trust records from outside of South West London.

Being able to access patient and service user information via the Connecting your Care view is proven to deliver time saving to both clinical and administrative teams in searching for patient/service user information that would previously have been searched for by phone/email. It can also reduce the number of tests/investigations you have to order as you have access to recent results from other providers.

Having information immediately available to you about a patient's medications, diagnoses, allergies, long term conditions, or social and mental health care plans can significantly inform your assessment and influence your treatment pathways.

Multidisciplinary teams use the Connecting your Care view to fully understand the patient care pathway and stay up to date, and work alongside, other providers engaged in the patient/service user journey.

How do I use Connecting your Care day to day?

Your local change team will be able to share some suggestions with you as part of your training as to how you, in your role, should use Connecting your Care day to day. However, the basic principle is that it is always good practice to

check the Connecting your Care view as part of all initial patient/service user interactions, such as triaging in emergency departments, on admission to wards, or in advance of seeing a patient/service user in outpatients or at a GP practice.

Connecting your Care is a powerful tool that can support multi-disciplinary working ensuring that all health and care professionals engaged in providing a citizen with services can see who else is providing care, upcoming appointments, existing diagnoses and medications, and summaries from providers such as, community, mental health and social care services.

In the world of Covid-19 it is now especially important that Connecting your Care can share acute and GP records from most of London for patients that might be transferred into our care. And likewise, if South West London patients are transferred out of the local area, such as to the Nightingale Hospital, their GP and acute records can similarly be shared to ensure the people looking after them get access to critical information to help inform their care and treatment decisions.

Connecting your Care should launch within seconds, and it only takes a few moments (once you are familiar with the view) to quickly see what is important when you are assessing someone.

What information will be shared?

Each organisation agrees the set of data that they will share for their patients/service users, although in some systems this is a nationally agreed dataset that cannot be changed (such as the GP systems). This might be different for each provider if they are using different record systems. For example, social care providers in South West London use two different record systems, and therefore will be sharing two slightly different datasets for their service users, but there will be a common core set of information shared.

The datasets that have been agreed for Connecting your Care can be found on the South West London Connecting your Care web pages. The dataset table will be a "living" document and updated at intervals when new organisations are added.

Connecting your Care includes adult and children's health records, and adult social care records only. Children's social care records are not currently being shared.

Certain information is defined as "sensitive" and will not be shared – this includes for example, information about sexual health, adoption and assisted conception records.

How does Connecting your Care work?

Connecting your Care is launched from within your patient/service user record system. It "pulls" existing information from the different record systems that are part of the sharing agreement into one aggregated view.

The information is displayed in a virtual, read-only screen. It cannot be electronically exported or extracted from the view or imported into your own systems. Because it is a "virtual" snapshot view, the data shared to you is "live" only for the duration that the Connecting your Care view is open in the patient/service user record.

Most record systems we are connected to "send" data in real time when it is "called" by you. Some systems will send a batch file to a data repository once or twice a day, which is stored and then "sent" to the aggregate view when you call the record. This means that whilst for most records the information you can see is "contemporaneous", some information may be on current up to within the last 12/24 hours (when the batch file was last sent).

The way in which each organisation shares data (so that you know if the information is "real time" or "within the last 24 hours") will be defined during your user training. This information is also available in the dataset table that can be found on the South West London Connecting your Care website. Please note, however, the datasets table is a "living" document, and the list of organisations, the data being shared and the way in which it is shared will be regularly updated as new organisations come into scope.

Can I save the information?

No. The information shared via the Connecting your Care view is read-only, and available in real-time at point of care. The information cannot be electronically extracted, exported or saved to your own system, although you can transcribe elements into your notes, appropriately referenced.

Connecting your Care does not replace existing processes for receiving or importing electronic information, such as discharge summaries and clinic letters sent electronically that you save to an electronic or paper record.

Information that you would normally receive via an existing electronic or paper workflow will continue to be shared to you in this way.

Printing or taking copies (such as photos or screenshots) of the information shared to the Connecting your Care view is a breach of data protection legislation. Any health and care professional found to have breached data protection regulations in this way may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with their local organisational data access protocols.

The secure management of data will be addressed as part of your Connecting your Care training, and also as part of your organisation's annual Data Security and Protection / Information Governance Training.

Which organisations are part of Connecting your Care?

The organisations that are part of the Connecting your Care programme are expanding all the time to include wider health and care sharing both inside South West London, and also across other areas where care to South West London citizens may be provided.

In South West London this includes:

• Acute trusts

• GP practices

• Community Services

• Mental Health Services

• Social Care Services

• NHS 111, Out of Hours and London Ambulance services

• Some hospices, community pharmacies and care homes.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic information sharing has also been expanded outside of South West London to include sharing records between acute Trusts and GPs across London, and this may extend also to surrounding areas.

This sharing has proved to be critical in supporting health and care practitioners caring for patients during the Covid-19 pandemic. Patients are commonly now transferred outside of their local area for emergency care (such as patients transferred to the Nightingale Hospital, or patients needing

GP or urgent care treatments at emergency hubs outside of their local borough). These information sharing pathways are expected to continue, due to the ongoing need to manage good information sharing for the duration of the pandemic.

Each organisation involved in the Connecting your Care programme must publish a Privacy Notice on their website that states the organisations with whom the information is being shared and must make this available on request.

You can find a full list of all of the Organisations who are part of Connecting your Care on our website [insert link].

Is the information shared safe?

Information shared about patients/service users is protected under current data protection legislation. This means that you may only access this information in your professional remit for the purposes of providing direct care to the citizen.

You have a professional responsibility to ensure that you access information via Connecting your Care solely for the purposes of helping you in the assessment and treatment of patients in your care. Accessing patient records for people to whom you are not in a "direct care" relationship, such as family members, or yourself, is a breach of data protection regulations. Any such breach of regulations identified will be managed via disciplinary processes within your organisation.

You have a professional responsibility to ensure that the information you access for the purposes of providing direct care to your patient/service user is kept secure and confidential, as per your organisation's data protection policies.

Connecting your Care can only be accessed via a secure NHS network, from within your local record system, and is controlled by your user profile.

Is Connecting your Care the same as Summary Care Record (SCR)?

No. Connecting your Care provides information from a much broader range of organisations than the Summary Care Record, which shows just a subset of information from the GP record.

If someone has previously opted out of sharing information does this automatically apply to my Connecting your Care record?

Due to the changes in data protection legislation it is not possible to carry opt out requests from other systems forward.

If a patient/service user tells you that they do not want to share their health or care records please advise them to contact the Data Protection Officer (DPO) for your organisation(s), stating that they wish to object to the record sharing. The DPO will respond directly to them.

The details about how to contact the DPO can be found in your organisation Privacy Notice, which should be available via your website.

How do I help someone if they tell me they do not want to share their information?

If a patient/service user tells you that they do not want to share their health or care records please advise them to contact the Data Protection Officer (DPO) for your organisation(s), stating that they wish to object to the record sharing. The DPO will respond directly to them.

The details about how to contact the DPO can be found in your organisation Privacy Notice, which should be available via your website.

Where can I go for more information?

For more information about Connecting your Care, please visit www.swlondon.nhs.uk/connectingyourcare

or contact Us: connectingyourcare@swlondon.nhs.uk or by telephone: 0203 668 3100