

NHS Central Register (NHSCR) Governance Board

31st July 2012

National Health Service Central Register

About the Register

The National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) contains basic demographic details of everyone born in Scotland, plus anyone else who is (or has been) on the list of a general medical practitioner in Scotland. The Register exists mainly to allow the smooth transfer of patients who move between Health Board areas (or across borders within the UK). It also provides to Scottish local authorities a unique reference number which is used to identify people on the database of local authority customers. The NHSCR operates under Section 57 of the Local Electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) Act 2006.

The History of the Register

On 29 September 1939, the Government carried out an enumeration of the population. The Second World War had started three and a half weeks earlier and the enumeration was a vital early step towards putting the nation on a war footing, providing the necessary information for:

- issuing national identity cards,
- issuing food and clothing ration books,
- identifying children eligible for evacuation from areas vulnerable to bombing
- identifying adults eligible for call up into the Armed Forces.

In Scotland, the enumeration was carried out by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) formerly General Register Office for Scotland (GROS), because of its responsibility for the Census. Every person was given their own unique civil registration number, based on where they were living on enumeration night. For people born after 29 September 1939, the number allocated when their birth was registered was used. On the formation of the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948, there was no central index of patients registered with a general medical practitioner (GP). This resulted in the rapid inflation of GP's lists as people moving about the country appeared on more than one list. The NHSCR was set up as an index to control this inflation in the early 1950s. It has acted ever since as an index to NHS patients. In 2004, it was asked to provide to the equivalent index of customers of Scottish local authorities, its unique reference number (the 'NHS number') for people who had asked to be added to the local authority database – to ensure that the local authority database accurately identifies the right person. That additional task was tested during 2006 and completed in 2007.

What is the Register used for?

Its main purpose is to permit the efficient movement of patient's medical record envelopes when they:

- transfer between Scottish Health Boards and health authorities in the rest of the UK;
- leave the country;
- join the Armed Forces (or are dependants of Armed Forces personnel).

The Register is also used to:

- issue NHS Numbers;
- trace people resident in the UK who have lost contact with their families;
- help medical researchers who have had their studies approved by a Privacy Advisory Committee;
- provide to Scottish local authorities a unique reference number which is used to identify people on the database of local authority customers;
- help measure migration within the UK, and between different parts of Scotland.

NHS Central Register Sharing Powers

The following outlines both the detail of the data we hold on the database and their origins. This information is being collected to inform the way forward on possible LEARS Act 2006 changes to allow NHS Central Register (NHSCR) further sharing powers.

Field on NHSCR	Origin	Owner of data items	Can NHSCR share data items?
NHS Number	Birth Registration Number	84% National Records of Scotland 16% NHSCR	Yes
England/Wales NHS Number (10 digit)		Department for Health – England/Wales/Isle of Man	with UK Health Only
Community Health Index Number		Department for Health – Scotland	with UK Health Only
Northern Ireland NHS Number (10 digit)		Business Services Organisation (Northern Ireland)	with UK Health Only
Registered (for health/local government)			Yes – UK wide No – LG only
Unique Citizen's Reference Number	NHSCR Number	National Records of Scotland (NRS)	Yes
Surname	Originator of data		
Forename	Originator of data		

Middle Name(s)	Originator of data		
Preferred Name(s)	Originator of data		
Date of Birth		84% NRS 16% NHSCR	Yes
Sex	Originator of data		
Town of Birth	Originator of data	7% of total database	
Country of Birth	Originator of data	53% of total database	
Mothers Birth Surname	Originator of data	47% of total database	
Postcodes (UPRN)	Originator of data		with data owner
Postings	Health		
Surveys	Approved Research Bodies	NHSCR	
Death Details	Civil Registration	NRS/Office for national statistics (ONS) /Ministry of Defence (MOD)	Yes
Previous NHS Number		81% NRS 19% NHSCR	with UK Health only
MOD references	MOD	MOD	MOD only
Notes	NHSCR	NHSCR	No

It is impossible to document the 'detail' of the above due to the extreme complexity of the data items. The context diagram (annex A) demonstrates the organisations that NHSCR interact with. We reassure the Board that we have the knowledge required to control the data always applying the Caldecott Principles and Data Protection requirements.

Below are the tracing avenues that we use to positively identify individuals. They are all accessible in electronic format and in the case of the 1939 Registers also as historic paper records. For data sharing purposes beyond feeding back information to the originator/Stakeholder only the NRS & NHSCR can be passed out with our organisation. All other avenues are under the control of their originators – not ours to share.

Database/System Name *	Origin* & date available to NHSCR from	Additional information available to allow NHSCR to make positive identifications
1939 & Associated Registers	NHSCR (1952)	Family Members; Address at 1939; Occupation; Historic Postings; Death details
Event Discs	NRS (1974)	Birth/Death/Marriage - Address at event ; parental/spouse details; dates of event
DIGROS	NRS (End 2003)	Copy of Birth/ Death/Marriage Certificates from 1855 – MMN, POB, Address at birth/death/marriage, parental/spouse / dependant (informant) details; Signature

CHRIS	NBOIC (2002)	Previous Postings and dates of acceptance in England/Wales/Isle Of Man, previous names
ESP	NRS (Before Aug 2007)	Copy of current birth/death/marriage certificates (as DIGROS except signature)
NHSCR Scotland SQL Server	NHSCR (17/12/2007)	
NHSCR Search	NHSCR (October 2007)	Family Members; Occupation; Historic Postings; Address at 1939 ; Death Details
CHI24	NSS (March 2008)	Current and previous address; Linked records - previous names / addresses; postings
PDS	CfH (September 2010)	E/W/IOM Address; Family Members; Historic postings and date of acceptance; Death details
NI (Open Exeter)	BSO (16/04/2012)	Previous Name; POB; NI Address; NHS number

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NHSCR National Health Service Central Register
NRS National Records of Scotland
DIGROS Digital Imaging of the Genealogical Records of Scotland's People
CHRIS Central Health Register Inquiry System
NBOIC National Back Office Information Centre
ESP Extract Search & Print
CHI Community Health Index
NSS National Services Scotland
PDS Personal Demographic Spine
CfH Connecting for Health
NI Northern Ireland
BSO Business Services Organisation