Continuity & Digitisation of GP Records Programme update July 2023

The Continuity and Digitisation of GP Records programme has been working on a new national strategy. This has taken time due to an iterative process of review, scoping and design that the programme has been undertaking to identify the most efficient and effective way to approach digitisation as we have learned more about the records that need to be digitised and how to protect the continuity of electronic health records. The programme has also needed to review what can be achieved with the new level of funding available.

Update on progress so far

The programme has made progress with reducing the burden of managing records in paper format in General Practice. Work to date includes improvement to the digital infrastructure which supports the transfer of digital records and creating repositories to hold electronic and scanned records.

In 2022/23 the programme implemented several changes to improve record transfer services for patients and GP practices including:

- Since August 2022, removing the requirement to reprint deceased patient digital records, eliminating the need for General Practices to print around 500,000 records per year.
- Ensuring the continuity of patients' digital records when they re-register after a gap in their GP registration. As of mid-June 2023, this has preserved the continuity of 141,000 patient records and removed the requirement to re-summarise these paper records, it is estimated this has saved 94,000 hours of GP practice staff time.
- Reduced the technical failure rate of GP2GP digital records transfers from 8% in mid-2021 to consistently below 2% from October 2022 onwards. This preserves continuity of around 178,000 digital patient records annually and removes the need for these to be reprinted.

New national digitisation approach

In 2022, the programme also appraised options for a national digitisation service. This included options to digitise all paper records, provide a national scan on demand service or to digitise records on transfer. To make progress within available funding in the next two years, the programme is exploring an option to digitise paper records at the point they are routinely handled by NHS England. This includes designing a new national repository for scanned Lloyd George records.

This new approach – "Digitise on Transfer" – would change the existing records service to a hybrid service which collected paper records when patients moved and provided them back to GP practices as electronic records.

To support GP practices that have an urgent requirement to release the space occupied by paper records in their surgeries, NHS England is reviewing existing procurement frameworks for 'storage and scan on demand' services to ensure that these meet national

standards for scanning quality, storage of paper and the route to store scanned records.

In the meantime, local areas can continue to approach the NHS Commercial and Procurement Hub to use the Dynamic Purchasing System for digitisation of their paper records if that is appropriate. These services, and any other local digitisation or records storage activities, would need to be funded locally.

Electronic health records continuity – plans for 2023/24

The programme will continue its focus on completing the improvements to the GP2GP service and on building repositories to store electronic records for de-registered patients and digitised Lloyd George records, to help eliminate the need for printing records.

Lloyd George envelopes

The programme has received confirmation from the Department of Health and Social Care that Lloyd George envelopes that have been scanned and electronically stored in line with national standards can now be securely destroyed.

If you have any questions about the Continuity and Digitisation of GP Records programme, then please do contact us at england.gprecordsdigitisation@nhs.net or via our FutureNHS page.