

Professional codes of confidentiality

The pages below contain extracts from the following codes of conduct/practice:

- General Medical Council (GMC) - Confidentiality 2009
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) - The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses and midwives 2015
- Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) - Confidentiality - guidance for registrants 2012
- UK Council for Health Informatics Professionals (UKCHIP) - Code of Conduct

Please visit the website addresses provided with each extract to view or download the complete codes.

1. Extract from General Medical Council “Confidentiality 2009”

http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/confidentiality.asp

Patients must be able to trust doctors with their lives and health. To justify that trust you must show respect for human life and you must:

- Make the care of your patient your first concern
- Protect and promote the health of patients and the public
- Provide a good standard of practice and care
 - Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date
 - Recognise and work within the limits of your competence
 - Work with colleagues in the ways that best serve patients’ interest
- Treat patients as individuals and respect their dignity
 - Treat patients politely and considerately
 - Respect patients’ right to confidentiality
- Work in partnership with patients
 - Listen to patients and respond to their concerns and preferences
 - Give patients the information they want or need in a way they can understand
 - Respect patients’ right to reach decisions with you about their treatment and care
 - Support patients in caring for themselves to improve and maintain their health
- Be honest and open and act with integrity
 - Act without delay if you have good reason to believe that you or a colleague may be putting patients at risk
 - Never discriminate unfairly against patients or colleagues
 - Never abuse your patients’ trust in you or the public’s trust in the profession.

You are personally accountable for your professional practice and must always be prepared to justify your decisions and actions.

2. Extract from Nursing and Midwifery Council “The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses and midwives” 2015

<http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/read-the-code-online/>

5 Respect people’s right to privacy and confidentiality

As a nurse or midwife, you owe a duty of confidentiality to all those who are receiving care. This includes making sure that they are informed about their care and that information about them is shared appropriately.

To achieve this, you must:

5.1 respect a person’s right to privacy in all aspects of their care

5.2 make sure that people are informed about how and why information is used and shared by those who will be providing care

5.3 respect that a person’s right to privacy and confidentiality continues after they have died

5.4 share necessary information with other healthcare professionals and agencies only when the interests of patient safety and public protection override the need for confidentiality, and

5.5 share with people, their families and their carers, as far as the law allows, the information they want or need to know about their health, care and ongoing treatment sensitively and in a way they can understand.

3. Extracts from Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). “Confidentiality – guidance for registrants” 2012

[http://www.hpc-](http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100023F1GuidanceonconfidentialityFINAL.pdf)

[uk.org/assets/documents/100023F1GuidanceonconfidentialityFINAL.pdf](http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100023F1GuidanceonconfidentialityFINAL.pdf)

The HCPC currently regulates the following professions:

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists / podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Hearing aid dispensers
- Occupational therapists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Social workers in England
- Speech and language therapists

Service users expect the health and care professionals involved in their care or who have access to information about them to protect their confidentiality at all times.

...you should keep the following principles in mind when handling information.

You should:

- take all reasonable steps to keep information about service users safe;
- get the service user’s informed consent if you are passing on their information, and get express consent, in writing, if you are using the information for reasons which are not related to providing care or services for the service user;
- only disclose identifiable information if it is absolutely necessary, and, when it is necessary, only disclose the minimum amount necessary;
- tell service users when you have disclosed their information (if this is practical and possible);
- keep appropriate records of disclosure;
- keep up to date with relevant law and good practice;
- if appropriate, ask for advice from colleagues, professional bodies, unions, legal professionals or us; and
- make your own informed decisions about disclosure and be able to justify them.

4. Extracts from UK Council for Health Informatics Professionals “Code of Conduct:”
http://www.ukchip.org/?page_id=1607

Respect the rights and interests of others

All health informatics professionals shall work to high ethical standards, respecting the legitimate rights and interests of their employer, other professionals, clients, and other relevant authorities by:

3. Ensuring that they and their organisation are aware of, and comply with, any relevant legislation or regulations, particularly as regards protecting the security, confidentiality, accuracy and integrity of health information.
4. Keeping confidential any privileged information obtained in the course of their professional duties regarding the activities of individuals or organisations - except where there is an overriding ethical or legal duty to disclose it.

Protect and act in the interests of patients and the public

All health informatics professionals shall, to the best of their ability, protect and promote the interests of patients and the public by:

2. Ensuring the security, confidentiality, accuracy and integrity of information, and protecting the safety of patients and the public, both directly through their personal actions and indirectly through the design and operation of any information systems for which they are responsible.
3. Reporting to the proper authorities any improper or misleading use of information, whether accidental or deliberate, or misconduct by any person in connection with the procurement, operation or use of information systems and equipment.
4. Promoting the appropriate use of information to enhance patient and public involvement and to support patient empowerment, dignity and choice.