

NHS Information Governance

Guidance for NHS Boards: Information Governance

Department of Health Informatics Directorate

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Information governance aims to support the delivery of high quality care by promoting the effective and appropriate use of information. The Information Governance framework for Health and Social Care is formed by those elements of law and policy from which applicable information governance standards are derived, and the activities and roles which individually and collectively ensure that these standards are clearly defined and met. Whilst a key focus of information governance is the use of information about service users, it applies to information and information processing in its broadest sense and underpins both clinical and corporate governance.

Since 2008, concerns about public sector data protection have resulted in the Cabinet Office mandating a range of standards for managing information risk, an important element of information governance. These standards are reflected within the NHS Information Governance Toolkit. The NHS Chief Executive, in his communications to NHS Chief Executives, has made it clear that the ultimate responsibility for information governance in the NHS rests with the Board of each organisation. Boards should note that:

- Information governance should be explicitly referenced within each organisation's statement of internal controls.
- An effectively supported Board level Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) is required in each organisation and should update the Board regularly on information risk issues.
- Appropriate annual information governance training¹ is mandatory for all staff who have access to personal data and for all those in key roles.
- An annual information governance assessment² must be undertaken with performance assessments published for review by the regulatory bodies³.
- Details of serious untoward incidents involving actual or potential loss of personal data or breach of confidentiality must be published in annual reports and reported in line with Department of Health guidelines, including to the Information Commissioner.

NHS Board members need to ask themselves:

1. "What have we done, as an organisation, to ensure we have implemented adequate policies and procedures and are addressing the responsibilities and key actions required to support effective Information Governance?"
2. "What were the outcomes of our most recent annual Information Governance assessment, and what measures (if any) have been put in place to address any identified deficiencies?"
3. "What plans do we have in place to ensure our organisation remains compliant with national standards for Information Governance?"
4. "Do we as an organisation have the capacity and capability to guarantee our plans for Information Governance can be implemented?"
5. "Do our information governance arrangements adequately encompass all teams and work areas that we are legally accountable for?"

¹ This may be provided through the [Information Governance Training Tool](#) (IGTT)

² This must be provided via the [Information Governance Toolkit](#) (IG Toolkit),

³ e.g. the Care Quality Commission, Commissioners, Audit Commission, Monitor and the National Information Governance Board