



## Freedom of Information request & West Norfolk CCG response

### WN-2017-0167 – Practice Manager contacts

**Under the F.O.I act, could you kindly please provide me with the email addresses of all Practice Managers within the CCG and the name of the relevant GP surgeries they manage? I will not be publishing the information you provide to me and will only use it personally to send occasional medical information that may be of interest to Practice Managers.**

*I can confirm that the CCG holds this information, however the CCG considers the information exempt under sections 21 (Reasonably accessible), 40 (Personal information) and 38 (Health and safety).*

#### Section 21: Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means

*Most of the information you have requested is publically available. Therefore, the CCG considers that this information is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Section 21 (Reasonably Accessible), which provides an exemption from the duty to disclose information which is accessible to the applicant by other means. The information can be accessed via the following link:*

- NHS North Norfolk CCG – <https://www.nhs.uk/Services/Trusts/GPs/DefaultView.aspx?id=89821>
- NHS South Norfolk CCG – <https://www.nhs.uk/Services/Trusts/GPs/DefaultView.aspx?id=89823>
- NHS West Norfolk CCG – <https://www.nhs.uk/Services/Trusts/GPs/DefaultView.aspx?id=89612>
- NHS Norwich CCG – <https://www.nhs.uk/Services/Trusts/GPs/DefaultView.aspx?id=89822>

#### Section 40(2): Personal information

*Some of the information you have requested is personal information, namely the direct staff email addresses.*

*Section 40(2) provides an exemption to the disclosure of information where it is:*

- *the personal data of someone other than you; and*
- *the disclosure of that personal data would put us in breach of the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 (“DPA”), with which we are obliged to comply.*

*The personal data within the withheld information is not public and disclosure of this information to the world at large would be unwarranted, does not add to the substantive understanding of the information disclosed, would cause substantial damage and distress to those data subjects involved, and thus would*

*be unfair and in breach of the first DPA principle and, as such, is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the Act.*

Section 38(1): Health and safety

*The CCG holds some non-personal email addresses to GP practices. These email addresses are used to communicate clinical information about patients or safeguarding issues.*

*Section 38(1)(a) of the FOIA states:*

*Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, endanger the physical or mental health of any individual.*

*Disclosure under the Act is 'to the world'. This means that information disclosed is considered to be in the public domain and access should be granted fairly and equally to all who request it. If the information was disclosed members of the public, including patients, may then obtain email addresses of practices who have not previously released this information. The CCG considers that there is a possibility that patients would use this email address to try to communicate their health concerns instead of calling or booking an appointment or other individuals or organisations may use this new channel for purposes for which it was not intended, e.g. marketing or enquiries. Since the email addresses have been set up for specific purposes (clinical and safeguarding information), the practices are not prepared for the use of these email addresses as a generic contact point and there is therefore a risk that important clinical or safeguarding information may be missed and patients suffering harm as a result.*

*This exemption is qualified and therefore the CCG has gone on to consider the public interest test.*

*Factors supporting disclosure:*

- 1. Disclosure of this information would provide the public, including patients, an additional way of communicating with GP practice staff. This would particularly benefit individuals who for various reasons would prefer to communicate via email or have difficulty communicating in person, via telephone or by post.*
- 2. Some practices already provide an email address for communication via NHS Choices and disclosure of an email address for each practice would provide a consistent approach for all patients registered with the CCG GP Practices.*

*Factors supporting non-disclosure:*

- 1. The requested information is not currently publically available. Therefore, the practices may not have procedures in place to monitor, deal with and pass on information sent to these email addresses from patients or others.*
- 2. There is a risk that important clinical or safeguarding information would be missed if the email accounts became generic contact points and therefore received a higher volume of emails. There is also a risk of miscommunication if an email address which had been limited to a few professionals and specific purposes became wider known.*
- 3. There are already established ways for patients and members of the public to communicate with the practice and its staff. These routes are well established and are therefore subject to internal procedures which allows the practice to manage information. Because there are already several different communication routes, there is a reduced need for an additional one.*

Conclusion

*The CCG has weighed the arguments and considers that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in releasing the information. The CCG believes there is a risk that patients may suffer harm due to miscommunication with their GP practice. The CCG therefore considers the information exempt.*

For any future correspondence regarding this request, please quote the reference number **FOI.17.NNO164, FOI.17.SNO155, FOI.17.WNO167 & FOI.17.NOR168**