

Information for patients

Asking about circumstances that may affect your health

What will I be asked?

GP practices in North East London are taking part in an initiative to ask patients four yes/no questions about their lives. You may be asked the questions by text message, during a routine interaction with your practice, or when you first register. The questions will ask about:

- Problems with housing
- Making ends meet
- Loneliness
- Understanding health information and advice

Why are you asking these questions?

Because some non-medical problems have a big impact on health. For example, living somewhere that is cold and damp can cause respiratory problems and weaken the immune system. Constantly worrying about money or feeling lonely can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and fewer opportunities for support. And people who find it difficult to understand health advice might be unsure about how to take their medications or may wait longer before seeking help.

By asking patients these questions, GPs will have a broader understanding of an individual's needs, allowing them to provide more personalised health advice during consultations.

What will the information be used for?

The yes/no responses will be accessible to doctors, nurses and other staff at your GP practice, giving them a fuller picture of the circumstances that might be affecting your health or treatment. The information will be visible in your health record so it can be used to tailor recommendations during a consultation, or to signpost to services within the community that could help to address the problems directly.

Where will my answers be stored?

The answers you provide to these questions are stored in your medical record. They will not be seen by anyone who does not have permission to access your medical record.

Will the data be shared with anyone?

Your personal answers will not be shared with anyone who does not have permission to access your medical record.

Data that does not identify individuals – for example, the number of people who are lonely –, will be shared with local authorities and NHS commissioners so they can anticipate demand for services and develop new initiatives targeted in the localities that need them.

Find out more about how NHS data is used for health and care on the NHS website: nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters/where-confidential-patient-information-is-used/

Do I have to answer the questions?

No, answering is completely voluntary.

Who designed the initiative and why?

The initiative was co-developed by NHS North East London (responsible for planning and buying health services to meet the needs of people in the region) and the Clinical Effectiveness Group (a not-for-profit group founded by practicing GPs within Queen Mary University of London's Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry).

- About NHS North East London:
northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk
- About the Clinical Effectiveness Group at Queen Mary University of London:
qmul.ac.uk/ceg/about-us



Publicly available data on deaths in the UK show that people who live in poorer areas **die almost 10 years younger** than people who live in well-off areas. The contributing factors go beyond healthcare – they are issues in wider society involving poverty, inequality, availability of good quality housing, and unstable employment. But NHS North East London and the Clinical Effectiveness Group want to help minimise the effects that these issues are having on people's health in the region.

The initiative starts in August 2023 and will run for two years, with a view to implementing it as routine in the longer term to help address health inequalities.