

Finding an NHS number

Information for clinicians

Everyone who is registered with the NHS in England and Wales has their own unique NHS Number. Each NHS Number is made up of 10 digits shown in a 3-3-4 format.

Example: 943 476 5919

Where can I find the NHS number?

Over 99% of patients in England, Wales and Isle of Man have an NHS Number. Most NHS hospital records will now contain the NHS number. Most patients will have documentation recording the number.

I do not have access to the NHS records or they do not show the number?

Finding an NHS Number for a person is achieved by searching for their record on the Personal Demographics Service (PDS), the national demographics database, and obtaining their NHS Number. This process is referred to as "tracing".

Tracing can be completed by one of 3 methods:

Multiple records batched in a file through the Demographics Batch Service (DBS).

One record at a time through the demographics tracing functionality within Summary Care Record Application (Scar).

Local IT systems with an online interface to the PDS service.

All of these methods require an N3 connection, i.e. a connection to the NHS secure network. You can find more information at:

<http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/systemsandservices/n3>

If you have a N3 connection and you would like to use the Demographic Batch Service (DBS) you can approach the Demographics team at demographics@nhs.net to find out more details.

I do not have a N3 connection and cannot connect to the Personal Demographics Service (PDS) to obtain the patients details - how can I get NHS Numbers?

If you do not have a N3 connection you could approach your PCT so see if they can perform a trace on your behalf through their own N3 connection or by matching against their local database. This should be considered as a one-off solution to populate your current set of records, as it will be unlikely that the PCT will be able to do this on a regular basis.

Ask your patient to help!

Your patient may have the number recorded on correspondence or can ask their GP for the NHS number.

If the patient has no number please ask him/her to help you by doing some detective work and give them the attached Information sheet.

If a private patient, for any reason, does not have an NHS number and does not want one, please ask for Consent to enter data onto the NAHR in the usual way and a different method will be used for identification.

