

What is Patchwork?

Patchwork was developed in the United Kingdom to save time and resources, for busy care providers to identify all relevant agencies who may be providing care to a young person or their family. In Australia, the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) has purchased the licence for Patchwork and will trial it as a tool to support better coordination and information sharing across agencies.

On the Central Coast, the regional leadership group, made up of multiple agencies including FACS, CCLHD, Police and Education, support Patchwork as a strategy to improve coordinated care for vulnerable young people.

Patchwork is an online service directory, built around the patient or client. The tool allows a practitioner¹ to:

- Add and maintain contact details for clients and practitioners
- See at a glance what agencies are working with clients and how to connect with them
- Invite others into a team working with the client
- Raise attention on a client

What is consent?

Consent is an important element in health care provision and in dealing with health privacy issues. Obtaining consent represents good clinical practice, as it involves clients directly in their health care decisions and provides a mechanism for exchange of information, about both the client's wishes and personal perspective and the clinical or other issues which may indicate to their service provider that information should be shared. Consent can be obtained in writing or verbally in person, however when obtained verbally, consent should always be recorded. For example; by a notation in the client's health record²

Elements of consent

- Consent should be **informed**. That is, there must be reasonable effort made to ensure that the person concerned has the information they need to understand what they are consenting to, why it is necessary or desirable and what may be the results both of giving and withholding consent.
- In order to be informed, the consent should also be **reasonably specific**. Reliance on general or blanket consents can be problematic if the client later indicates they were not informed of the particular usage proposed.
- Consent should be **freely given**. That is, the person must not be coerced, pressured or intimidated. They should not feel they have no choice or that they do not have enough time to make up their mind.
- Consent should only be sought from a person who has **capacity** to consent
- Consent should be **timely**. The validity of the consent is dependent on the client's expectation. For example, if it is a standard consent for all clients, the validity may be 12 months or longer if the client is accessing ongoing services. However, if the consent is for a specific use and disclosure of information, the recommended timeframe is 3 months.
- The validity of a consent is more likely to be questioned where a lengthy period of time has passed or the client's personal situation has changed so markedly that there are grounds to suggest their views may have changed. Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the reason for disclosure directly relates to the terms of the consent.
- Consent can be obtained **in writing or verbally in person**, but when obtained verbally should always be recorded, for example, by a notation in the client's health record.

Client information collected on Patchwork, is limited to name, address and date of birth only. Consent to share information cannot be recorded within Patchwork and should continue to be recorded in the client's clinical notes.

How do I gain consent from client?

Consent can be obtained in writing or verbally in person. When obtained verbally it should always be recorded in the client's health record³.

For more information on consent see Privacy Manual, NSW Health 2015;

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/manuals/Pages/privacy-manual-for-health-information.aspx>

To help explain Patchwork to clients, there is an [information sheet for client's](#) located on the intranet. This resource has been designed in consultation with young people.

¹ Extract from the Patchwork Evaluation Plan 2014 – 2015 Version 2 FUTUREGOV

² NSW Ministry of Health Privacy Manual Section 5.4, page 5.03

³ Privacy Manual for Health Information, NSW Health 2015 5.4 Consent

Do I need consent to search for a client in patchwork?

We do not need to seek consent, if the activity is done for ongoing care (or planning of care services). Most systems are moving to "opt out". So, if you are searching for a client with the aim of planning their care and seeing what services are already involved in their care, you do not need their consent to do this.

Looking up a client in Patchwork, would be similar to looking up a client in the Electronic Medical Record (eMR) to see if they have had previous contact with the Local Health District. Any system used within the Local Health District, should only be used for work related purposes and as long as staff are accessing this system to fulfil the functions of their roles, then there are no issues.

Do I need consent to add myself to a team for a client that I am working with?

We do not need to seek consent, if the activity is done for ongoing care (or planning of care services). So if you are searching for a client with the aim of planning their care and seeing what services are already involved in their care you do not need their consent to do this. You will need the clients consent before you provide information to services outside of the LHD who are involved in that persons care.

If a client is not already on Patchwork, do I need consent to add them as a new client to the system?

You will require consent to add a client to Patchwork. The main reason is that this is not an internal NSW Health system and agencies outside NSW Health may view the client's details.

It is important to explain to the client, that other agencies can see their name, date of birth (DOB) and address and they can see which other agencies are involved in caring for them. Providing a context to the client about better caring for their health and social care needs, may also help the client to decide whether to provide consent.

You can use the [Patchwork information sheets](#), to help you explain the concept of Patchwork or refer them to the [Patchwork Explained YouTube clip](#).

It may also help to explain to the client, that by working together, all the agencies can provide more coordinated care for them. You can also remind the client, that to remove their details, they can contact Patchwork@fac.nsw.gov.au and their details will be removed within 24 hours.

Are there times when I do not need client consent to share information with other agencies?⁴

It is always good practice to obtain consent to share information, however, information can be shared without client consent when the situation is covered by specific legislation. This legislation is designed to support information sharing, where there is an element of safety or risk and to share information would reduce that risk and allow care providers to work better with the client and their family.

- ***The Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act 1998*** recognise that care and protection of young people is dependent on shared information. Access to accurate relevant information, will assist organisations working with children and young people to assess risks, make decisions and to identify and deliver appropriate services. The legal framework for information exchange allows organisations to share information relating to the safety welfare and wellbeing of children and young people, without consent. It takes precedence over the protection and confidentiality of an individual's privacy, because the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people is considered paramount.⁵ If you are unsure whether this act applies to the circumstances of your client, contact your clinical supervisor or manager or seek advice and support from the Child Protection Team at CCLHD or Child Wellbeing Unit 02 4367 9659
- ***Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act⁶*** facilitates the exchange of information between prescribed agencies for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child or young person. Exchange of information in accordance with Chapter 16A does not constitute a breach of privacy laws. For more information about exchange of information under chapter 16A see [Child Wellbeing and Child Protection Policies and Procedures NSW Health PD2013_007](#). This policy contains useful information in section 6.12 page 29 about verbal and written exchanges of information under 16A. You can also see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#), on the CCLHD Intranet.
- ***Mental Health Emergency Response 2007*** – the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NSW Health including the Ambulance Service of NSW and NSW Police Force. The MOU provides for collaborative management of persons who have a mental illness or mental disorder or who exhibit behaviours of community concern.⁷
- ***HIV/AIDS – related Information*** – There are strict limitations on the release of this information, where the client has not provided consent. Information can only be disclosed⁸:
 - To a person who is involved in the provision of care, treatment or counselling to the person concerned as long as the information is relevant to the provision of such care, treatment or counselling
 - To the secretary, if a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that failure to disclose the information would be likely to be a risk to public health, or
 - For the purposes of any legal proceedings arising out of the Public Health Act

⁴ Additional Acts to inform privacy and consent are detailed in the Privacy Manual for Health Information 2015 4.01 Privacy Laws and Related Legislation

⁵ Child Wellbeing and Child Protection Policies and Procedures for NSW health, PD2013_007 section 6.1

⁶ Privacy Manual for Health Information, NSW Health 2015 4.1.5 Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act

⁷ Privacy Manual for Health Information, NSW Health 2015 4.1.2 Mental Health Act 2007

⁸ Privacy Manual for Health information, NSW Health 2015 4.1.2.3.2 HIV/AIDS related information

Are there times when I do not need client consent to add a client to Patchwork?

Under most circumstances, you will need client consent to add someone to Patchwork, unless it is covered under the legislation listed above. The Children and Young People Care and Protection Act, allows organisations to share information relating to the safety welfare and wellbeing of children and young people, without consent. It takes precedence over the protection and confidentiality of an individual's privacy, because the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people is considered paramount.⁹ Clinicians using Patchwork, should always try to seek consent, however, if they believe the use of Patchwork will support coordination of services and better serve the client's safety, welfare and wellbeing for children or young people, they may choose to add the client to Patchwork, without consent.

Where clinical judgement has been made that client details should be added to Patchwork under any of the legislation above, clinicians should clearly document their reasons for sharing information without consent in the clinical notes. Clinicians should reassess the risk, and when the situation is resolved they will need to either seek consent from the client to remain on Patchwork, or request that the client is removed from Patchwork if consent has not been provided.

Do I need client consent to invite other agents to join the team for the client?

It is good practice to try to obtain client consent, to invite another agent to join the team however you do not *need* client consent to do this. This is because the intention of inviting others into the client's team, is done for ongoing care (or planning of care services).

Inviting others to join the team, does not necessarily mean that you are sharing clinical information, just exchanging agent contact details.

Do I need consent to seek information from other agents about my client?

It is good practice to try to obtain client consent, before you contact another agent to seek information about a client, however...

| SCENARIOS | CONSENT REQUIRED | RATIONALE |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Where the agent is not from Health...</i> | No - You do not need client consent to seek information | The responsibility to obtain client consent is with the agency providing the information. For example: A health worker who joins a client's team on Patchwork and sees that a Housing officer is involved with the persons care, can phone the housing officer, to seek information about the clients housing situation. Where the client has provided consent to the housing officer to share their information, the housing officer can provide information to the health worker. The health worker can take note of the information, however, cannot disclose any health details of care, without the client's consent. |
| <i>Where the agent is providing ongoing health care</i> | No - You do not need consent to seek information | You do not need consent to seek information from the agent, and they can provide you with the information you are seeking, as long as it is being given for the purposes of providing ongoing healthcare and treatment. |

Do I need clients consent to provide information to other agents about my client?

It is good practice to obtain client consent, before you contact another agent to seek information about a client, however...

| SCENARIOS | CONSENT REQUIRED | RATIONALE |
|--|------------------|---|
| <i>Where the agent is from another NSW Health service or a GP ...</i> | No | You do not need consent to share information, if the request is from another health service (GP, Specialist, Community Centre). This is because it is classed as ongoing patient care. This is the same if the GP contacts you for information, you can pass the information on, without gaining consent from the patient, because it is for ongoing care. |
| <i>Where the agent is from outside the Health Services (from a social care agency such as FACs or NGO or other government service provider)...</i> | Yes | Where you are contacted by another agency who is not a health care provider, you will need the clients consent to share information. The consent will need to clearly state, what information the client is giving permission to release and to whom. Without consent to share, you can only disclose information where this is covered under legislation that allows you to share information, without consent (for example: Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act). |

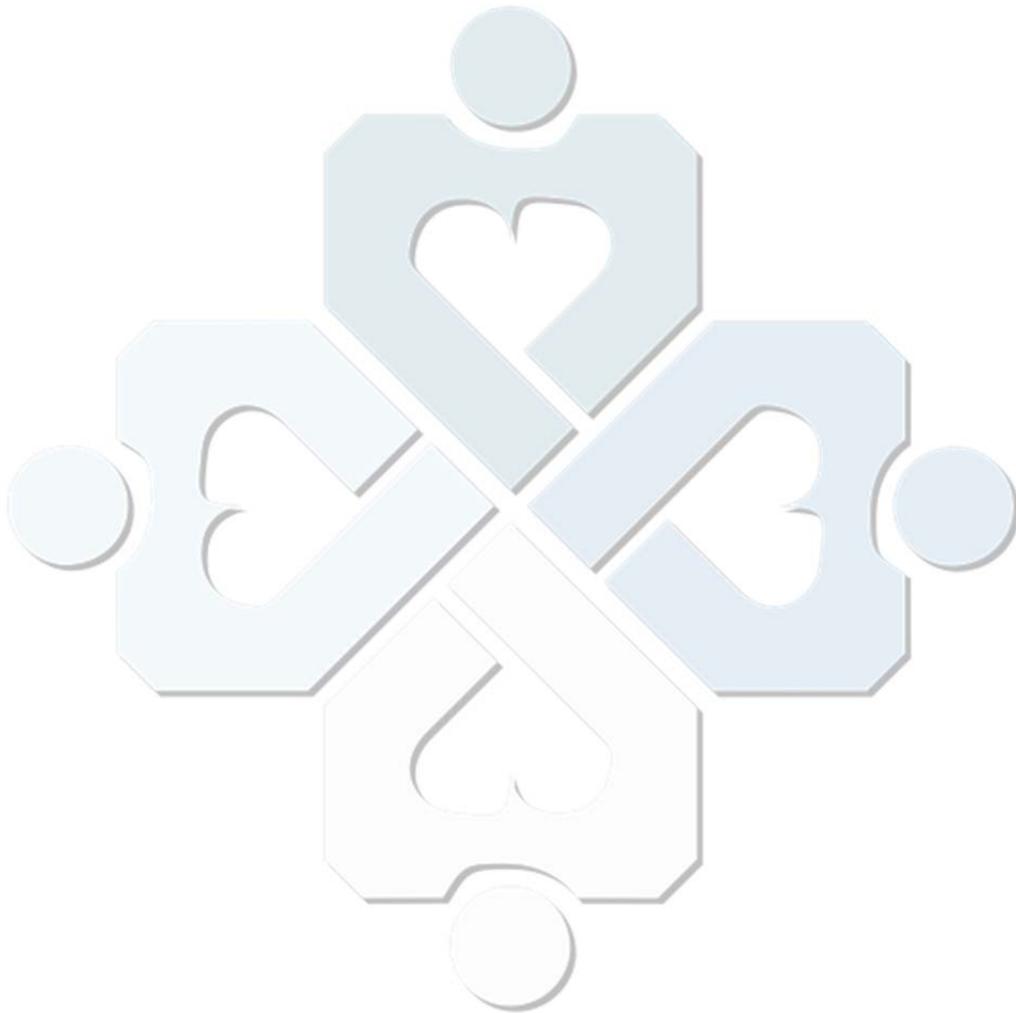
⁹ Child Wellbeing and Child Protection Policies and Procedures for NSW health, PD2013_007 section 6.1

I like using Patchwork but I have some ideas of how to make it better – who do I talk to about this?

Like all technologies, Patchwork will evolve and we can shape this if we provide feedback to the developers. FutureGov are keen to hear about our experiences and will work with us to adapt the tool, where possible. To provide feedback, talk to your team manager or email Sarah Bradfield – Youth Stream Manager, Central Coast Integrated Care Team at Sarah.Bradfield@health.nsw.gov.au .

For more information contact;

Sarah Bradfield
Stream Manager – Vulnerable Youth
Central Coast Integrated Care Program
Phone: (02) 4320 5415
Email: Sarah.Bradfield@health.nsw.gov.au
Street address: Level 2, 37 William Street Gosford NSW 2250
Postal address: PO Box 361 Gosford NSW 2250



In collaboration with;