

FOR STAFF



Part of the
**NHS Research Secure Data
Environment Network**



West Midlands Secure Data Environment

Supporting inclusive research
and care planning to reduce
health inequalities





What is the West Midlands Secure Data Environment?

The West Midlands Secure Data Environment (West Midlands SDE) is a major new project led by the NHS. It will improve healthcare and support health innovation by making better use of data.

It will provide an environment in which safe, secure health research can take place to benefit everyone living in the West Midlands.

It will do this by securely bringing together health information from across the region, creating a large pool of invaluable data that will enable researchers to discover answers to important health questions and help reduce health inequalities.

The SDE will also enable health and care service planning to be better informed through data. It will support innovative advances in how care and treatment are provided.

And by linking primary and secondary care data, it will offer researchers and service planners a more complete picture of people's health.

Researchers already use NHS patient data to carry out their work, but the West Midlands SDE will make the whole process better and safer.

What is health data?

Health data is information collected through everyday healthcare – such as blood tests, scans and biopsies. It includes details relating to a person’s physical or mental health condition.

Doctors, nurses and other health professionals rely on data every day to make decisions about our direct care. But health data also potentially has another, much wider use, in which our own information can be combined with that of other people to build a large collection of data.

Bringing together all this information enables analysts and researchers to see patterns and trends across different health conditions. By analysing the data and learning from it, they can develop life-changing and life-saving treatments to improve care for us all.

Meanwhile, people who plan health and care services can gain a better understanding of the care needs in our local communities. Working with local partners, they can use this knowledge to design fair and equal services that help prevent ill-health and time spent in hospital.





Why this matters

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that data saves lives. Tracking the spread, identifying those most at risk, and the fast development of effective vaccines were just some of the ways health data was used to help fight the virus.

Secure data environments have been created to build on what was learned from this, so we can continue to realise the potential of life-saving research and treatments. The West Midlands SDE will help us respond to a whole range of health conditions, from those seen across the whole population to rare ones affecting small groups of people.

It will also enable us to work with health and care staff to understand and improve healthcare in those parts of the West Midlands with the greatest need, where people's health and life expectancy suffer due to having fewer opportunities to live a healthy, active life or to receive the right care.

More generally, it will benefit all people living across the region, ensuring everyone has the same, high-quality, efficient healthcare, with services able to offer the right support to meet the health and care needs of local people.

In the past, accessing NHS data for research has been time consuming, delaying the introduction of new treatments and more proactive and preventative care. The West Midlands SDE is designed to make this process easier while ensuring the highest data protection standards.

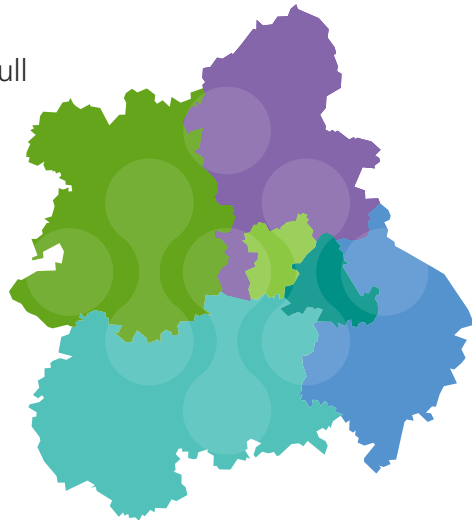
Who is involved?

Universities, hospitals and other health and care-related bodies from the six integrated care systems (ICSs) in the West Midlands are working together on the programme to share their existing data.

An ICS is a partnership of the organisations that plan and deliver health and care services in a particular area.

The ICSs involved are:

- Birmingham and Solihull
- Black Country
- Coventry and Warwickshire
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent



Are there other secure data environments?

Yes, there are 12 in total across England. The West Midlands Secure Data Environment is part of the national NHS Research Secure Data Environment (SDE) Network, which brings them all together.

Will people's health data be kept safe?

The West Midlands Secure Data Environment employs strict levels of privacy and security to protect people's information and keep their personal details confidential.

The West Midlands SDE:



protects people's information to ensure their confidentiality



uses the highest level of cyber security



strictly vets researchers and health and care planners, along with their reasons for using people's information



allows researchers and health and care planners access only to the information they need to answer their research and health and care planning questions, and only in secure and controlled settings



involves local people to help ensure the West Midlands SDE stays safe and private at all times.

Can people say no to their data being included?

We need researchers to keep trying to find new, life-saving medicines and treatments, especially for our biggest health problems such as cancer and dementia.

We also need a better understanding of the health and care needs of people across our region so we can support them to live healthier, longer lives by transforming the way we work.

What we can learn by analysing people's health and care data is the key to making all this possible.

People who are happy for their health and care information to be used for research and care planning through the West Midlands SDE do not need to do anything.

However, anyone who wants to opt out **only** from West Midlands SDE-supported research projects and care planning can download and complete a form from our website's Local Data Opt-Out page at westmidlandssde.nhs.uk/your-data/local-data-opt-out.

This can be emailed to WMSDEOptout@uhb.nhs.uk, or posted to:

**West Midlands SDE
R&D
1st Floor
ITM
Heritage Building
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Birmingham
B15 2TH**

People wishing to opt back in can do so using the opt-in form at westmidlandssde.nhs.uk/your-data/local-data-opt-out. It can be downloaded, completed and returned in the same way as above.

If anyone would prefer us to complete the form for them, we will soon be able to do this by phone. We will publish more details at westmidlandssde.nhs.uk/your-data/local-data-opt-out when this service is available.

Those who do not want their health information used for **any** research or care planning can tell us at nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters, or call **0300 303 5678**.





When is this happening?

Researchers already use health data in this way. The West Midlands SDE enables them to continue, while making the process better, more efficient and, importantly, more secure. We hope to make health data available for care planning as the programme develops.

How can I get involved?

There will always be opportunities for you and the people you care for to get involved with the West Midlands Secure Data Environment as people living in our communities are essential to our decision making.

If you're interested in taking part in any way, please visit the 'get involved' page of our website at westmidlandssde.nhs.uk/news/get-involved.

You can also email us at WMSDE@uhb.nhs.uk.

Want to know more about the West Midlands SDE?

Website: westmidlandssde.nhs.uk

Email: WMSDE@uhb.nhs.uk

Scan the QR code to be directed to our website.

If you would like this information in an alternative format (for instance, braille, audio, easy read or your spoken language) please contact a member of our team at the email address above.

Scan me

