POEM Privacy Notice

The Patient-Rated Outcome and Experience Measure (POEM) has been developed to help improve the quality of perinatal mental health services. To support these improvements, we would like to understand your experience of the service you have received. If you have a partner, family member or another person who has been closely involved in supporting you, they may also wish to provide feedback about their experience. POEM data collection is managed through the Perinatal Quality Network, which is part of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych).

This information will help the service think about ways of making things better for other patients who access the service, both now and in the future. Therefore, what you tell us is very important. This privacy notice will tell you all you need to know about how the information you provide will be used. We will only use your data if you say we can.

The College is the data controller for the information you provide to us as part of the POEM. Trusts are separate controllers for identifiable information they hold.

If you have any queries about the process or how we handle your information, please contact us at dataprotection@rcpsych.ac.uk.

Sources of information

You can either complete the questions online using a survey tool called SNAP or as a paper version. Responses submitted online will generally be anonymous unless you choose to include identifiable information in the free-text comments. Where paper questionnaires are entered by staff, the information may be pseudonymised rather than anonymous. No one apart from the person who enters your information on the system will know the information is about you unless you include identifiable information in your free-text response.

The data collected are pseudonymous and comprise sensitive information (such as ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation and religion).

Security and confidentiality are maintained through access controls, password protection, registration processes, encryption and restricted user permissions.

The RCPsych project team cannot identify the individual service user from the information we receive.

Where the data is pseudonymised, the individual NHS Trusts or organisation, hold the information needed to link a service user to the information submitted about the individual's care.

The network also gathers registration information directly from NHS Trusts or organisations to support the management of POEM, such as contact details for the local individuals responsible for the Trust or organisations in the project.

Data are submitted via a secure web-based tool hosted on the College's servers.

What will we do with the information you provide to us?

All the information you provide will only be used for the purpose for which you provided it, for academic research purposes, or to fulfil business, legal or regulatory requirements if necessary.

RCPsych will not share any of the information provided to us with any third parties for marketing purposes.

Information is held in secure data centres which comply with ISO 27001 security standards.

The information you provide will be held securely by us and/or our data processors whether the information is in electronic or physical format.

All the data is accessible only to authorised staff members working on the network and data processors with approved access.

All data is held within restricted areas, is password protected and encrypted.

The projects produce public reports on the aggregated data at national levels at specific points during the project.

Individual team, service or NHS Trust or organisation reports are only made available to the NHS Trust or organisation who provided the data.

RCPsych may also publish data on its website and in appropriate scientific journals.

What information do we ask for and why?

The network does not collect more information than we need to fulfil our stated purposes and will not retain it for longer than is necessary. We only collect the information necessary for the purposes of POEM, including questionnaire responses and the demographic information requested within the survey. We will not be able to identify you using any of this information unless you include any identifiable information in the comment box. Identifiable information would include your name or contact details. Your partner/family may also be asked to fill in the same questionnaire. This will also only contain identifiable information if included in the comment box.

Use of data processors

Data processors are third parties who process data for us.

All the information provided to our data processors is pseudonymised and they will not share your personal information with any organisation apart from us.

They will hold it securely and retain it for the period we instruct.

How long is the information retained for?

The network adheres to the timescales specified in the College's Record Retention Schedule.

We will keep your information for the duration of the project and for up to five years after the project has ended, unless you withdraw your consent and we are able to identify your response. At the end of the retention period, your information will be securely deleted or anonymised.

If you wish to learn more about our retention periods, please contact us using the details below.

Legal basis for processing

Participation in POEM is voluntary. The lawful basis for processing your personal information is consent under Article 6(1)(a) UK GDPR. Where responses contain information relating to health, the condition for processing special category data is explicit consent under Article 9(2)(a) UK GDPR.

Where we can identify your response, you may withdraw your consent at any time. If your response is anonymous and cannot be linked back to you, it may not be possible to locate and remove it once submitted.

Confidentiality

The information received and managed by the project teams is treated as confidential.

The information is available to the project teams in a pseudonymised format, unless identifiable information has been included by the service user.

In the case of pseudonymised data, individual patients are only identifiable by the submitting NHS Trust/organisation if a paper survey has been manually uploaded or the service user has chosen to include identifiable information.

The project teams will not publish information that can enable individual service users, family, friends or carers, or staff to be identified, nor allow third parties to access the data.

The confidentiality and security of information is maintained in the following ways:

All reports include aggregated data at the relevant level (national, NHS Trust/organisation).

Data pertaining to individual services, NHS Trusts or organisations are only shared with the relevant organisation concerned.

Small numbers are suppressed and aggregated or shown only where there is no identifiable information.

Rights of the service user

Under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 individuals have rights which they can exercise in relation to the information we hold about them.

You have the right to request access to personal information we hold about you. Where responses are anonymous and cannot be linked to you, we may be unable to identify information relating specifically to you.

What if a service user does not want their information used?

Taking part in the questionnaires is voluntary, and service users are free to decide whether they wish to complete them. Their decision will have no impact on the care or support they receive from the service.

If a service user provides identifiable information through a questionnaire and later changes their mind, they can contact a member of staff and ask for their information to be removed. They do not need to explain their reasons. We will delete the information we hold about them, unless there is a legal or regulatory requirement for us to keep it.

For further information about how to opt out, service users should contact the person responsible for the project within their local NHS Trust or organisation. The network project team does not hold information that directly identifies individuals and is therefore unable to process opt-out requests on behalf of participating organisations.

Complaints or queries

The College takes any complaints we receive about the way in which we use personal data very seriously.

We encourage people to bring it to our attention if they think that our collection or use of information is unfair, misleading or inappropriate.

If you want to make a complaint about the way we have processed your personal information you can contact us using the details at the bottom of this notice.

You can also complain to the Information Commissioner's Office directly:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Website: http://www.ico.org.uk/

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Changes to this privacy notice

We keep our privacy notice under regular review. This Privacy Notice was last updated in September 2026.

How to contact us

If you want to request information about our privacy policy you can email us at dataprotection@rcpsych.ac.uk or at the below address:

Data Protection Officer
Royal College of Psychiatrists
21 Prescot Street
London
E1 8BB