



General Register Office for Scotland
information about Scotland's people

Paper NHSCR GB 1/09

Citizen Account Update

June 2009

Background

1. As well as putting that existing work of the NHSCR on a clear statutory footing, Section 57 of the Local electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) Act 2006 allowed the information on the NHSCR to be used to assist in the operation of the local authority Citizen Account. That is a voluntary scheme, under which each citizen is able to apply to have an account recording all entitlements and transactions with local authorities. A national infrastructure for the Citizen Account, holding basic details of every account holder, is accessible to all local authorities where a particular citizen has opted to allow that, by giving their informed consent. Under Section 57, the Registrar General checks new applicants against the NHSCR and provides to Scottish local authorities a unique reference number which is used to identify people on their database, to reduce the risk of fraudulent applications and to simplify administration. The Registrar General can also alert local authorities when an existing account holder dies. In that way, the Act has allowed the NHSCR to provide local authorities with a similar service to that which it traditionally provided to the NHS in Scotland.

Procedures in Place

2. During 2008/09, NHSCR staff prepared to start devising and adapting our procedures to give the local authority pilot areas the same service that we offer to NHS Boards. We are now fully ready to start and we have carried out analysis to ensure the best electronic match without compromising accuracy.

3. Over the year we have manually checked around 400 applications for citizen accounts which could not be matched automatically to an NHSCR record, covering deaths, name difference and truncated names. We have requested a system update to expand the surname field for existing records which are longer than fifteen characters, which should improve automatic matching.

3. The Improvement Service, which acts for all Scottish councils, was given access to 3 extracts last year, containing 337,905 records. These extracts contained details of updates for death, names changes etc that had been made to NHSCR records in the intervening periods. As a result of these downloads, the Improvement Service has recognised that to be able to keep the local authority version of the NHSCR in step with the NHS version, they need to be able to identify all records that change. Work was carried out in late 2007 to develop a mechanism to allow this to happen and, as part of the migration of the NHSCR systems from mainframe to Sequel server, we made changes which are now about to be put into production. Activation of these changes will allow the local authority version of the NHSCR to keep in step with Swapped, Merged and Deleted records.

4. We are also in process of looking to populate the NHSCR database with the local authority Property Reference Number, postcode and council area codes.

5. Meanwhile, the Improvement Service has recently finished user acceptance trials of the national infrastructure system which will allow councils to set up live citizen accounts, replacing the interim batch-processed version which has operated hitherto. The interim system has allocated dummy numbers for applicants who cannot be matched with the NHSCR, and there will be a back-record task of cleansing these records, once the live system is running. We are keen to identify the NHSCR staff time which will be needed

Security

6. To date there have been complicated security arrangements for ensuring the safe passage of data between the two versions of the NHSCR. As part of the Swap, Merge and Deletion activation, we are streamlining the way we pass the data by using the now active N3 connection that is now in place.

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