ChatHealth is a safe and secure messaging platform which helps healthcare service users get confidential help and advice from healthcare professionals. The privacy of our service users and the safety of their personal information is extremely important to us. This privacy notice explains more about how we will handle your personal information and how we will respect your privacy, if you use a ChatHealth messaging service to speak to a healthcare professional.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Local healthcare teams that use ChatHealth messaging usually offer the opportunity for you to ask for help and advice anonymously, without giving your name. Your conversation is also confidential. Except for in some exceptional circumstances, your local healthcare team will not normally inform anyone that you have been in touch or tell them what you have been speaking about.

Information that is seen when you send text messages

When you send SMS text messages to speak with a healthcare professional through ChatHealth, the person you are speaking with will only be able to see your mobile phone number, unless you give any further personal details, such as your name or date of birth, as part of the conversation.

Opting out

You can end a messaging conversation at any time by sending the word STOP in a message. This would normally prevent a healthcare professional from sending any further messages to you.
Supporting you in exceptional circumstances

In some exceptional circumstances, like if something you tell your local healthcare team gives them reason to believe your safety or someone else’s safety is at significant risk, their duty of care requires further action to be taken. For example, they might notify other healthcare, welfare or emergency services which can help to ensure you are safe and well. If they do need to tell someone else about something you have said, they will usually try to speak with you first.

In exceptional circumstances, information relating to your mobile phone number may be used to try to locate you. If you have sent a STOP message the healthcare professional you are speaking with may ask us to over-ride it so they can try and check that you are safe from harm.

Information that is recorded and who can see it

When you speak with a healthcare professionals using ChatHealth messaging they will keep a copy of the conversations as an electronic record that can be seen by other healthcare professionals who follow the same confidentiality rules. The record will include your phone number and any other details you mentioned in your conversation, plus other information, like times that messages were sent and any additional notes made by the healthcare professional during the conversation. The conversation may be recorded onto a healthcare system that can be seen by your family doctor (GP) if you have given personal details such as your name or date of birth as part of the conversation.

Legal basis for keeping information

Healthcare staff using ChatHealth will normally speak with you about how they are using your personal data. Because they have a statutory duty to care for you, there is no legal requirement for them to ask your permission before making a record of the messaging conversations you have with them. Similarly, when speaking with children and young people, healthcare staff using ChatHealth do not need to ask permission from a parent or guardian. This even applies when they are messaging with younger children, under the age of 13. The UK data privacy laws make this possible so that healthcare staff can fulfil their responsibilities. There are particular special provisions in law for digital services like ChatHealth which prevent ill-health or offer counselling.
How records of conversations are used

Keeping records of conversations also enables healthcare staff to fulfil their responsibilities. It makes it possible for us to provide you with the best possible healthcare, including keeping you safe from harm and making decisions with you about your healthcare.

How long information is kept for

Once your local healthcare organisation has taken a copy of a messaging conversation, it can be kept for a substantial period of time. For children this can be until they are well into adulthood. No information is kept long term in the ChatHealth application. Within a few days of your messaging conversation being concluded it will no longer be seen by staff using ChatHealth. It will be deleted from our servers within a month. In the long term we only save anonymous statistical information relating to conversations.

Information about you that is processed

In order that we can keep services running safely and effectively our technical staff will be involved in processing information relating to your messaging conversations. This includes staff working for technical partner organisations. You can expect us to handle data which will include your phone number and the content of your messages including any personal information about you that you mention. Although technical staff would not normally see your conversation with a healthcare professional, they all still follow the same strict confidentiality rules.

Information security

Our technical systems and partners are subject to the same strict information security regulations that apply to all NHS systems and organisations. All information we handle is encrypted whilst being transmitted and whilst being stored. All our data storage facilities, including cloud services in the EU and physical data centres in the UK, meet up to the very highest information security standards. Because our SMS partner processes some information using cloud services in the US, we have taken additional measures to ensure it is treated in exactly the same way as data which is processed in the EU and subject to the same rules and regulations. All ChatHealth technical staff and partners are bound by strict confidentiality rules which prevent them from sharing, disclosing or onwardly processing information about you.
How you can help

When you send messages to speak with a healthcare professional through ChatHealth, it is important that you consider the security of the device you send the message from. Remember to lock your smartphone and any other linked devices if you do not want other people to be able to see your confidential messaging conversations. Please also remember that, when you send SMS text messages to speak with a healthcare professional through ChatHealth, your chosen mobile network provider also has to act responsibly to ensure the safety of your personal information.

Your rights

Data protection law gives you rights in relation to way your personal information is being used. These include the right to access any information which is held about you, the right to change or restrict any information which is being held about you if you think that something is factually incorrect and the right to contact us formally and object to us processing or storing data.

You have a right to erasure, in other words, a right to “be forgotten”, but this does not apply to your use of ChatHealth because we have to store information to ensure we can provide you with safe healthcare.

There are also other rights which aren't relevant to your use of ChatHealth, such as those relating to data portability and automated processing.
**Further questions or comments**

Contact us if you would like to find out more about anything relating to information about you which is being processed or stored when using ChatHealth. We can also help put you in touch with your local healthcare teams that are operating your local ChatHealth service who are also involved in processing and storing information about you.

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**Operator**

ChatHealth is operated by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, the data processor.

**Regulator**

If you have any concerns or complaints about how your information is being used, you can contact the Information Commissioner’s Office - [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)
TERMS OF SERVICE

All local healthcare teams that use ChatHealth messaging usually offer similar terms of service although there can be variations from one area to another. Promotional materials for your local service will tell you about any terms and conditions that are unique to your area.

Timeliness

Healthcare professionals using ChatHealth will usually aim to reply to you within one working day and you should get an immediate bounce-back to confirm we received your first message. Messages will not be seen by healthcare professionals outside of normal working hours.

Alternative sources of help

If you need help whilst you are waiting for a response to a message you have sent, contact your family doctor (GP) or call NHS 111. If it is an emergency call 999 or visit A&E.

Supported formats

ChatHealth SMS messaging numbers do not receive voice-calls or MMS messages (including “picture messages”). Please be aware that if you write particularly long messages they may be converted to MMS format by your mobile network provider. ChatHealth SMS messaging numbers support messages from UK mobile phone numbers only and do not support messages sent from landlines, international mobile numbers and some “number masking” mobile apps.

Messaging rates

When you send SMS text messages to speak with a healthcare professional through ChatHealth, messages will be charged at your usual rate by your mobile network phone provider.
Message retries

Text messages between you and a healthcare professional should usually be delivered within moments, but the safe delivery of your inbound or outbound messages cannot be guaranteed if there is a problem with your chosen mobile network provider, signal quality or mobile device. In the event that we cannot get a message to you, we will continue trying for around three days.

Service misuse

We support a zero tolerance approach to messaging which contravenes the policies on bullying and harassment which are held by local healthcare teams that use ChatHealth. In extreme cases of threatening and offensive behaviour, service may be withdrawn. Information about serious service misuse may also be provided to other authorities for further investigation.

Restrictions on mobile phone use

When you send messages to speak with a healthcare professional through ChatHealth, please consider any restrictions on the use of mobile devices which may be in place in the area around you.