# *Hospital Episode Statistics (HES)*

**Key contact details:**

To discuss any aspect of the HES dataset you can contact the NHS Digital team via phone 0300 303 5678 or email enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk

**HES data dictionary:**

HES is a data warehouse containing details of all admissions, outpatient appointments and A&E attendances at NHS hospitals in England. HES data covers all NHS CCGs in England, including: private patients treated in NHS hospitals, patient's resident outside of England, and care delivered by treatment centres funded by the NHS.

Each HES record contains a wide range of information about an individual patient admitted to an NHS hospital, including: clinical information about diagnoses and operations; patient information such as age group, gender and ethnicity; administrative information such as dates and methods of admission and discharge; geographic information such as where patients are treated and area where they live.

For further detailed information, take a look at the HES data dictionary.

**Accessing HES data:**

HES publish a number of standard analyses on the NHS Digital website. Data tables and analyses are free to access and can be downloaded and published from the data catalogue. Find monthly HES publications and the catalogue here.

Given the huge number of combinations of fields within HES, it is only possible for HES to publish a limited number of analyses. If the data you're looking for can't be found via the catalogue, you will need to apply for other standard and bespoke extracts.

HES data can be accessed through the following methods:

- The Data Access Environment – approved users can access NHS data to perform analysis. DAE hosts some of the world's leading analytics tools, for example Databricks which is a collaborative analytics platform that supports SQL, Python and R languages. Further information and guidance on accessing HES via DAE can be found here.
- Monthly Managed Extract Service – users receive an extract from HES on a monthly basis.
- Data Access Request Service (DARS) – users who require bespoke analyses can request extracts from HES or tabulations tailored to their requirements via the online portal. The NHS Digital DARS pathway is outlined below.

**Data Access Request Service (DARS):**

**Step 1.)** Enquiry: Not all enquiries progress to the application stage, it may be that requirements can be fulfilled through existing data published on the NHS Digital website. To speak to the NHS Digital team about your data requirements you can get in touch using the key contact details at the top of this page.

The pre-application checklist and further guidance on completing a successful application can be found here.

**Step 2.)** Making an application: The application process sets out the nature of the requested data and the purpose for it being requested. Prior to making an application, it is important to note that your organisation must have a valid Data Sharing Framework Contract in place. If you are unsure whether your organisation has a current contract, contact NHS Digital on the phone number or email address listed at the top of this document.

DARS documents and guidance can be accessed here. Ensure you submit the application with the required information and supporting documentation via the DARS online portal.

General tips for all DARS applications:

- Be transparent – be clear and consistent.
- Be precise – list your purpose, explain acronyms and assume that the application will be read in isolation to other documents. Your purpose should explain: WHY you need data; HOW you will turn the data into products that generate benefits to Health and Social Care systems.
- Ensure you have legal basis – a legal basis must be in place to allow NHS Digital to receive, process and disseminate the data. It is your responsibility to ensure you have these before submitting.
- Learn from others.
- Justify any identifiable or sensitive data, and that you have sought to minimise the amount of data required.

Once your application has been submitted you will be allocated a case officer who will review your application and if necessary schedule an appointment to discuss anything outstanding that must be completed for your application to progress.

**Step 3.)** Approval: DARS undergo stringent review by staff and independent groups against published criteria. The application is reviewed by the Independent Group Advising on the Release of Data (IGARD). The panel consists of independent specialists and lay members of the public. If GP data is also included in the application an additional review is completed by the Professional Advisory Group (PAG).

The application process is expected to take approximately 30 working days.

**Step 4.)** Access: Once a DARS application is approved, the data will be made available by Secure Electronic File Transfer (SEFT) or through the Data Access Environment (DAE). If via SEFT, NHS Digital will provide a user name and password for the SEFT service.

**User access agreements:**

NHS Digital data is never provided without a contract. All releases are covered by two contracts:

Data Sharing Framework Contract with NHS Digital – this creates a framework of legally binding terms and conditions that applies to each and every agreement with NHS Digital to share data with the digital recipient. An application cannot be progressed until an organisation has signed a contractually binding DSFC.

Data Sharing Agreement – relates to the specific use of data, covering the data required, minimisation, purpose, funding, etc. Once all reviews of a data application are complete then a contractual DSA is issued. The DSA is electronically signed by NHS Digital in the DARS

online system. The applicant will review the agreement, provide a PO number and then electronically sign the agreement. The data is then produced, reviewed and signed off by NHS digital. The data will be made available once the data sharing agreement is signed and the data production process has commenced.

NHS Digital carry out regular data sharing audits to check that data users are meeting the obligations in their contract and data sharing agreement.

**Cost of access:**

Charges are in place to cover the costs of managing the application, processing data and providing access.

NHS Digital do not charge for data but do apply charges to cover the cost of processing and delivering the service. Costs are broadly determined by the amount of effort and approvals required. Actual costs will be agreed during the application process.

Charges are calculated on the following components; type of application, the volume of data requested, the frequency that you require data to be disseminated.

A new application will cost around £1,000, with additional charges applied depending on the above components listed. Charges will range widely depending on the data required, example costings provided by NHS Digital show charges ranging from £5,000 - £28,000. Example costings and further information can be found here.

**Additional information:**

Training: Free data awareness training – The Safe Data Access Professionals Group helps share expertise, best practice and knowledge between organisations. This is aimed at promoting best practice when generating Safe Outputs in Safe Settings. These free data awareness training courses and modules provide users with best practice information on working with statistical data.

HES online user training video – explains how to use HES data, providing users with valuable context, leading to a better understanding of the data and how it's produced.

Further information and access to training resources can be found in the 'further information' section at the bottom of the following webpage.

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