

Primary Care Support England (PCSE) GP PRACTICE MERGERS AND CLOSURES FORM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) GUIDE

INFORMATION FOR GENERAL PRACTICES AND NHS ORGANISATIONS

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Guide has been developed to support NHS GP Practices, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) and NHS England Region Local Teams (NHSE RLT) to complete and submit formal requests and notifications of Practice Mergers Closures (PMC's) for General Practices.

In the FAQ Guide below, Part A has been specifically designed for General Questions and Part B for questions relating to each part of the Practice Mergers Closures Form.

Completed forms need to be submitted by or with your NHS England Regional Local Team to the pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net and titled '**GP practice closure or merger**'

PART A - GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question 1: What Section of the Practice Merger Closure Form should be completed for a Practice Closure or a Practice Merger?

Answer: Sections 1, 3 and 4 in the PMC Form should be completed for Practice Closure's and Section 2, 3 and 4 for Practice Merger's.

Question 2: What part of the form needs to be completed if a Practice is closing as part of a Merger?

Answer: Practices will need to complete Section 2 and state the practice closing as part of the merger in Section 2B. Practice Mergers regularly involve the closure of practices.

Practices that are closing as part of a merger will then be able to provide further information on Practice Patient Lists movements in Section 2D and Medical Records Transfers in Section 2E before updating their financial information in Section 2G which requires the completion of an additional document titled 'Declaration of Banking Details for Practice Mergers' and a 'Pensions Estimation Form'. These forms must be submitted with the PMC Form and are provide by PCSE.

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PART A - GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question 3: Why does Section 3 of the Practice Merger Closure Form need to be completed if the CCG is Fully Delegated?

Answer: The National NHAIS System pre-dates the formation of CCG's, therefore the system still requires that for all General Practice Mergers and or Closures details from the approving NHS England Local or Region team need to be entered. Failure to confirm and/or provide this information will result in the PCSE services being unable to complete the necessary updates to the national system.

Question 4: Where should a back dated Practice Merger or Closure be submitted to that has happened in the past and there is no evidence that it has been actioned on the system?

Answer: When querying any back dated Practice Mergers or Closures please ensure that you provide the Practice Codes, Practice Names, Effective Date(s), Clinical System Merge dates via email to pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net The PMC Team will be able to check the system and records and in the event of a practice merger or closure having not been actioned we log the notification as an exception and request the necessary forms are completed for our immediate action.

Exceptions are reported weekly and investigations into causes of exceptions are reviewed for response, whilst this process takes place the PMC Team will request forms be completed with the information necessary to process the merger or closure as a matter of urgency.

Question 5: What notifications or queries can be sent to pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net mailbox?

Answer: Only Practice Mergers and Closures (PMC) Notifications, PMC Queries, PMC Forms and Letter Requests should be sent to the pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net mailbox.

Question 6: How much notice is required for a Practice Merger/Closure?

Answer: Notifications for Practice Mergers and Closures should be given 4-8weeks prior to the Clinical System Close/Merge Date and the Effective Date on the National System, with exception of immediate closures which form part of immediate removals and are actioned with 24/48hours notification. Notifications of any practice mergers or closures taking place during the financial year may be given in as much advanced notice as possible.

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Question 7: Who will provide notifications/updates on the progress of the Practice Merger or Closure?

Answer: Notifications for Practice Mergers Closures will come at three key stages of the process which are sent from the pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net mailbox from the PMC Team;

- i. Email Notification confirming receipt of all submitted forms, where forms submitted are incorrect or are missing information you may be contact to re-submit forms.
- ii. Email Notification post the 'Effective Date' of the practice merger being updated on the National NHAIS System;
 - a. Practice Closures – Confirmation email that after the 'Practice Closure Date/Effective Date' which is the closing date of the GP Practice on the National system has been updated. In the event of a practice list dispersal it may take 1-3months for the practice closure to be finalised on the National NHAIS System. Upon completion a confirmation email will receipt that the system has been updated and that the Payments/Pensions team will then complete their necessary updates which can only take place after the system has been updated post effective date for Performer Lists and Registration details.
 - b. Practice Mergers – Confirmation email that after the confirmed Clinical System Merger date that the 'Effective Date' (the date that the national system needs to merge post clinical system merger) has been completed. The confirmation will confirm the new practice links for the 'Merged' GP Practice, it will also confirm that the system has been updated for Performer Lists and Registration and will then pass to Payments/Pensions to complete the necessary updates for finalisation.
- iii. Email confirmation post GP Practice Payments and GP Pension details having been updated. This email will confirm that the practice merger/closure process is completed, should any issues or queries arise to contact the pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net team.

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PART A - GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question 8: What general guidance is available when planning practice mergers?

Answer: The following guidance is recommended for consideration when planning any practice mergers;

Mergers and Effective Dates

- Practice Mergers (also closures) are recommended to take effect immediately at the end or start of any financial year quarter period. This is to ensure accuracy in the PCSE Payments and Pensions calculations for payment.
- GP Practices and CCG's are recommended to schedule and plan any merger(s) around the Clinical System merge date(s) ensuring the timeliness falls within the financial year quarter period and at the start or end of the quarter.
- The Clinical System Merger must take place before any merger on the national NHAIS system can be performed by the PCSE service team.
- Should the date for the Clinical Systems merger and fail to reside within the same financial year quarter period, then the PCSE service team will be unable to complete the merger of the practices on the NHAIS systems due to the inaccuracy of information that any gap in time longer than a quarter period will cause;
 - As previously stated the Clinical System must merge in the first instance before PCSE service team can action the merger on the national NHAIS system.
 - The only actions that may be performed in this instance are a practice may which to complete a Declaration of Banking Form confirming that their merging practice wishes to change their banking details for payments to an agreed single account as per any agreed business changes as part of the newly merged practices.
 - The practice may also wish to amend the address details of the practices which have changed location/premise but continue to work on their individual separate practice systems until the later clinical system are due to merge. In this event practice payment will still be calculated individually as separate practices.

Merging Clinical Systems

- General Practices and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) need to ensure that they have engaged with the clinical systems provider of the

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general practices involved to ensure that the effective date for the Practice System Merger falls within the required timeframe, as per the above these should be at the start or end of a financial year quarter period.

- Clinical System Merger dates should be confirmed in Section 2B of the Merger Form the 'Effective Date' of the Merger on the national system update required within proximity 24/48hours.
- Practice Mergers involving multiple GP Practices need to have the merger dates and patient lists actions clearly stated in the PMC Form.

Merging Practices and General Practitioner Details

- NPL3 Forms for GPS's involved/effected by the practice merger are now to be completed and submitted to the pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net mailbox along with the PMC Form and Declaration of Banking Details Form. These will be processed as part of the practice merger to ensure that the system is updated.
- Open Exeter system access for the GP's and Practice Primary Contacts will also be actioned as part of the Practice Mergers Closures process, the completed Practice Merger Closure form will be actioned by the Open Exeter team after the 'Effective Date' that the changes are made to the national NHAIS system. Any Open Exeter Access queries post the 'Effective Date' and having received confirmation from the Practice Mergers Closures Team at pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net that your merger has been completed need to be submitted to pcse.openexeter@nhs.net quoting your practice codes and the date of your recent merger followed by your specific access queries.

Patient Transfers / Letters and Medical Record Collections

- Please refer to page 11 of this FAQ Guide under Part B and Section 2 for Practice Mergers information that links directly the Practice Merger Closure Form.

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PART B – QUESTIONS ON PRACTICE MERGER CLOSURE FORM	
SECTION	PRACTICE CLOSURES
1	
1A	<p>Question 1: Do I need to complete an individual form for each separate practice closure or can I submit one form for multiple closures?</p> <p>Answer: Every GP Practice Closure is recorded and processed individually, the information and circumstances for each closure may well differ and to avoid any confusion we request that every GP Practice closure is submitted separately.</p> <p>This will help us to provide individual notifications of receipt and ensure that the specification information/actions for that closure are processed accordingly (such as letters and record collections or patient list transfers/dispersals).</p>
	<p>Question 2: What is the Practice Closure (Effective Date)?</p> <p>Answer: This is the last day that the GP Practice is/was open, after which the practice system will be closed and the GP Practice needs to be closed from this date on the national NHAIS System.</p>
1B	<p>Question 3: What details am I providing in Section 1B and why do I need to confirm an NPL3 Form?</p> <p>Answer: For each individual GP Practice Closure we will need to update the national system not only for the patient information but for the General Practitioners. To assist in this, we ask for the full list of all GP's at the practice and confirmation of their role. Because the GP Practice is closing we will request NPL3 Forms confirming the subsequent change in the GP Role/Details so that we may update the national system.</p>
	<p>Question 4: Where do I send any NPL3 Forms for the GP's involved in the Practice Closure?</p> <p>Answer: NPL3 Forms for GP's involved directly in the Practice Closure will need to be submitted with the Practice Closure Form to pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net which with the Practice Closure Form will be processed together by our Performer List team.</p>

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1C	<p>Question 5: What is the recommended guidance on GP Practice Closures and Patient Lists?</p> <p>Answer: It is recommended where possible that practice lists are transferred rather than dispersed. However, in the event of any immediate removals of GP's and subsequent closer of a GP Practice, immediate patient list dispersals may have to be actioned.</p> <hr/> <p>Question 6: What is the recommended process for Patient List Transfers?</p> <p>Answer: In the event of a practice closing where it is possible to transfers the practice lists the following should be considered;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the patient list be transferred to one single practice, if yes then complete Section 1C of the Form for Transfers and provide and additional instructions? A letter to the patients will need to be completed if so in Section 1D. • Can the patient list be transferred to multiple practices, if yes then you may need to considered dividing the practice lists Alphabetically for the transfer and provide by way of a letter notification to patients giving them the option to re-register should they not be happy on a given date after the merger (Complete Section 1D for any patient letters). <p>Patient Lists can be divided for example A-F, G-L, N-R, S-Z and transferred to practices, different variations are dependent on the number of practices.</p> <p>The negative in this approach is that upon giving the patients the option to re-register at another practice results in any receiving practices having a slight increase in workload to process the patients as new registrations but this could be mandated by any date that you specify in the letter to the patients to occur at a time which is suitable for the practices receiving.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postcode transfers of patients are timely and require each patient to be individually and manually transferred, because of this it is an option that is not recommended and other alternatives are recommended.
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1C	<p>Question 7: What is the recommended process for Patient List Dispersals then?</p> <p>Answer: In the event of a practice closing and the patient list is to be dispersed the following should be considered;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please note that in the event of a GP Practice Patient List dispersal, engagement and instructions from the NHS England Region Local Team will be required to advise details and confirm process / instructions • Direct engagement with the Performer Lists team will be required to support NHS England Region Local Teams. This engagement will be ongoing until the patient lists are cleared from the system against the closed practice. • Letter notifications to the patients informing them of the impending practice closure will need to be confirmed in Section 1D. • Not all letters may reach all patients dependent on how accurate and up to date the system is with each patient's individual personal details. • On average, it can take 1-3months to clear patients from the practice list on the system dependant on list size. • Practice List closures must be completed within any quarterly period.
1D	<p>Question 8: What information do I need to provide to have letter notifications sent to patients, also what are the charges?</p> <p>Answer: If letter notifications to patients are required please complete and confirm Section 1D, stating the date to be sent and any additional instructions.</p> <p>GP Practice and CCG's are requested to submit a Draft Letter in Word Document format to pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net , which can be sent upon submission of the PMC Form or separately.</p>

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1D	<p>Question 9: How quickly will the letters be processed and sent out?</p> <p>Answer: Upon receipt of the letter template confirmation and details are sent to our service team from where letters are currently processed from within 2-5 working days, on the last working day letters will be posted out to patients. GP Practices/CCG's depending upon the contact details will receive a direct communication from our Letters Team from pcse.patientletters@nhs.net who will engage with you directly post submission of the form to the PMC Team.</p> <p>Postage of letters is generically by 2nd Class Postage and comes at no charge to the GP Practice/CCG, and a total of 2 Letters may be sent out in total at no cost/charge. Additional letters will include charges as will changing the postage class from 2nd Class to 1st Class.</p>
1E	<p>Question 10: How do I arrange to have the medical records collected?</p> <p>Answer: By completing Section 1E of the form we will arrange for our supplies team to contact the GP Practice/CCG depending upon the contact details, to confirm courier collection and details regarding the medical records collection and transportation. Confirmation of courier bookings will then be emailed separately and the PMC Team will record the confirmation and reference numbers onto our PMC Log to ensure that all collection requests are processed.</p>
	<p>Question 11: What Stationary can be collected along with medical records?</p> <p>Answer: Stationary that is un-opened, un-damaged and within date can be collected as part of the medical records collections for closing or merging practices. Please ensure that stationary is prepared for collection and marked accordingly.</p>
	<p>Question 11: How do I package or prepare medical records for collection?</p> <p>Answer: Where the patient list is being transferred to another practice it is assumed that the medical records will need to be collected from the closing and practice and delivered to the main surgery of the receiving practice.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP Practice must ensure that each individual Medical Records are securely bagged in the individual Polylopes (which are available to order via the supplies portal). Medical Records must then be bulk bagged in sacks for courier collection (sacks are available to order via the supplier portal). • In the event that the medical records transfer is a local transfer within a small radius, the PCSE Supplies team would accept for GP Practices to forgo the polylopes but to securely package all medical records in boxes provided by the practice(s). <p>Where the GP Practice is closed with immediate effect the medical will need to be collected from the closing practice and delivered to National Medical Records Storage Facility in Darlington.</p> <p>GP Practice must ensure that each individual Medical Records are securely bagged in the individual Polylopes (which are available to order via the supplies portal). Medical Records must then be bulk bagged in sacks for courier collection (sacks are available to order via the supplier portal).</p>
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1D	<p>Question 12: If the practice closes what notifications does the PCSE Pensions team require for estimations of pensions?</p> <p>Answer: In the event of a practice closure the completion of the Practice Merger Closure Form will act as formal notification to the PCSE Pensions Team, who are required to perform a mandatory update of all effected performer pension information. The form is submitted to pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net where the coordinating team ensure that all respective services are notified and actions checked for completion.</p> <p>It is important to note that due to pension certifications being generated annually, and both current and next financial year certifications being required, the PCSE Pensions team will notify each individual performer once their records are finalised (This may take between 12-24 Calendar Months).</p>
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PRACTICE MERGERS	
SECTION 2	
2A	<p>Question 1: The Practice Merger involves more than 3 Practices?</p> <p>Answer: Please feel free to amend the form adding additional copied rows into the form to provide entry details for further practices e.g. Add in GP Practice 4 onwards until the desired number is met.</p> <hr/> <p>Question 2: What if different practices are merging into one larger/super practice but the 'Effective Dates' change or differ for each individual one, can these be done on one merger form></p> <p>Answer: Every GP Practice Merger is recorded and processed individually, the information and circumstances for each merger may well differ and to avoid any confusion we request that every GP Practice Merger is submitted separately especially where the 'Effective Dates' for clinical system mergers are different.</p> <p>This will help us to provide individual notifications of receipt and ensure that the specification information/actions for that closure are processed accordingly (such as letters and record collections or patient list transfers/dispersals).</p>
2B	<p>Question 3: What is the Effective Date of the merger?</p> <p>Answer: The Effective Date of a Practice Merger is the date that the PCSE Service Team will update the National NHAIS system with the practice merger, before this takes place GP Practices/CCG's are now required to confirm in the Mergers Form the exact date that the Clinical Systems of the Practice(s) will merge.</p> <p>Clinical System must complete their merger before the PCSE Service Team can complete the update on the National NHAIS system.</p>

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2C	<p>Question 4: Why do I need to confirm the current Performers/GP's Practice details and why do I need to confirm if an NPL3 Form has been completed?</p> <p>Answer: In Section 2A and 2B of the form you will have confirmed the details of the practices involved in the Practice Merger, in Section 2C we will need to match any changes to the current Performers/GP's registered at each practice involved.</p> <p>To assist the PCSE service teams we have requested to confirm the current roles and current GP Practice name that each Performer/GP is currently registered at and whether they will be part of the new merged practice.</p> <p>For Performers/GP's whose practice are closing as part of a merger will automatically be required to complete and NPL3 form to confirm the change in details.</p> <p>Performers/GP's whose practices are merging but are remaining the same and are the main surgery site will not need to complete an NPL3 Form unless their role has changed.</p> <p>Performers/GP's whose practices are merging and are becoming a branch site as part of the merged practice will again need to complete an NPL3 form to confirm their roles within the new practice.</p> <p>Resigning or retiring Performers/GP's automatically must complete an NPL3 Form as part of any merger.</p>
2D	<p>Question 5: What is the process for merging practice patient lists?</p> <p>Answer: Guidance on Practice Mergers as whole is available in Section A of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Guide under Question 9.</p> <p>In Section 2D of the PMC Form, GP Practices/CCG's are requested to confirm the merging of patient lists. As the practices involved in the merger may will be merging and undertaking significant changes to the General Practice and its Patients Lists it may well also be merging with minimal changes to the General Practice and its Patient Lists. Including in the form is the option to including instructions and contact details for whom the practice wish the PCSE service team to email once the transfers are completed on the 'Effective Date'.</p> <p>The following examples will help to provide guidance on the types of mergers possible and the scenarios involving engagement with/from PCSE service teams</p>

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<p>2D</p>	<p>For example, a merger type might see Practices A and B merge with Practice C, the latter becomes the main surgery for the merged practices. Both Practice A and B remain at the same geographical location and the Performers/GP's do not change at the practice, both practices however become Branch Sites as part of the newly merged practice. In this scenario, only the business payment/banking details for the practices will change, the Patient Lists will be Pooled and no physical courier collection and transfer of medical records is required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the PMC Form Section 2D this would be considered as requiring minimal changes as far as a merger is concerned. <p>Another example would see Practices C and D merge with practice E, the latter practice becomes the main surgery for the merged practices. Practices C merges with the Practice E and will close thus due to its Senior GP Partner retiring, the practice will complete a transfer of its patient to Practice E. Practice D continues to operate in the same geographic location as a Branch Site to Practice E and its Patients List for a Pooled List with Practice E as there are no actual changes to its registered GP's.</p> <p>A final example would see Practice F and G merge with Practice H, the merged practices wish to keep the Practice Code from Practice F but will change the practice name. All the Practices are moving to a single new premise and will form one single surgery. Several of the Registered GP's are retiring from different practices in addition several new GP Partners are joining in addition to Locums. The practices decide to close the practices and move into the new premises on slightly different dates but within 24/48hours. Medical records will be need to be collected from each practice location and transferred to the new premises and letters will need to go from each practice to the patients two months in advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the PMC Form Section 2D both above examples would be considered as requiring moderate to a high number of changes as far as a merger is concerned.
<p>2E</p>	<p>Question 6: How do I arrange to have the medical records collected?</p> <p>Answer: By completing Section 2E of the form we will arrange for our supplies team to contact the GP Practice/CCG depending upon the contact details, to confirm courier collection and details regarding the medical records collection and transportation. Confirmation of courier bookings will then be emailed separately and the PMC Team will record the confirmation and reference numbers onto our PMC Log to ensure that all collection requests are processed.</p>

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2E	<p>Question 7: How do I package or prepare medical records for collection?</p> <p>Answer: Where the patient list is being transferred to another practice it is assumed that the medical records will need to be collected from the closing and practice and delivered to the main surgery of the receiving practice.</p> <p><u>GP Practices must ensure that all their Medical Records are securely boxed in advance of any collection. Boxes must be securely fastened so that no access to the medical records can be made without first tampering with the box seals.</u></p> <p>Where the GP Practice is closed with immediate effect the medical records will need to be collected from the closing practice and delivered to National Medical Records Storage Facility in Darlington.</p> <p><u>GP Practice must ensure that each individual Medical Records are securely bagged in the individual Polylopes (which are available to order via the supplies portal). Medical Records must then be bulk bagged/boxed for courier collection. Boxes must be securely fastened so that no access to the medical records can be made without first tampering with the box seals.</u></p>
2F	<p>Question 8: What information do I need to provide to have letter notifications sent to patients, also what are the charges?</p> <p>Answer: If letter notifications to patients are required please complete and confirm Section 2F, stating the date to be sent and any additional instructions.</p> <p>GP Practice and CCG's are requested to submit a Draft Letter in Word Document format to pcse.practicechanges@nhs.net , which can be sent upon submission of the PMC Form or separately.</p> <p>Question 9: How quickly will the letters be processed and sent out?</p> <p>Answer: Upon receipt of the letter template confirmation and details are sent to our service team from where letters are currently processed from within 2-5 working days, on the last working day letters will be posted out to patients. GP Practices/CCG's depending upon the contact details will receive a direct communication from our Letters Team from pcse.patientletters@nhs.net who will engage with you directly post submission of the form to the PMC Team.</p> <p>Postage of letters is generically by 2nd Class Postage and comes at no charge to the GP Practice/CCG, and a total of 2 Letters may be sent out in total at no cost/charge. Additional letters will include charges as will changing the postage class from 2nd Class to 1st Class.</p>

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2G	<p>Question 10: Why do I have to complete the Banking Declaration Form for Practice Mergers?</p> <p>Answer: As part of the Practice Mergers process the updating of all Practice Bank Details for Payments will be necessary, in order to improve the time through which it takes to process the necessary Payments and Pensions system on NHAIS for the Practices involved in the merger we are asking Practice to complete forms in advance that will assist in the PCSE service team to process merger requests more quickly.</p> <p><u>Payments and Pensions service teams will contact GP Practices and GP's directly to confirm details which are not to be shared in any forms as part of Data Protection and compliance to our Information Governance policies.</u></p> <p>Pension 1st APRIL OTHERWISE ANY OTHER TIMES ITS ONE FORM PER PRACTICE AND AN ADDITIONAL ONE FOR THE NEW MERGED PRACTICE</p>
	<p>Question 11: What happens with performer pensions when practices merge?</p> <p>Answer: For merged practices each practice involved in the merger will need to complete a pension estimations form, a new pensions estimations form will also need to be completed for the newly merged/formed practice.</p> <p>The newly merged/formed practice may wish to confirm to the PCSE Pensions team confirmation of providing authority for the pension adjustments to be completed under the newly merged practice. <u>Pension service teams will contact GP Practices and GP's directly to confirm details which are not to be shared in any forms as part of Data Protection and compliance to our Information Governance policies.</u></p>
<p>NHS ENGLAND REGIONAL OR LOCAL TEAM CONTACT</p>	
<p>SECTION 3</p>	
2A	<p>Question 1: Why do I have to complete Section 3 of the Practice Merger Closure Form if my CCG is Fully Delegated?</p> <p>Answer: The National NHAIS System pre-dates the formation of CCG's and therefore from a system perspective all General Practice Mergers and or Closures require a confirmation/approval in the system from a member of the Local NHS England Team. Failure to confirm/provide this information will result in the PCSE administrative services being unable to close the system and run the updates.</p>

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GP PRACTICE/CCG CONFIRMATION	
SECTION 4	
2A	<p>Question 1: Why do I have to complete Section 4 of the form?</p> <p>Answer: In the event of needing to contact to GP Practice/CCG and the point of contact coordinating and managing the practice closure or merger we will need contact details.</p>