

# **PAS Introduction - What is Ethnic Group?**

An Ethnic Group is a group of people who share characteristics such as language, history, culture, upbringing, religion, nationality, geographical and ancestral origins and places. This provides the group with a distinct identity as seen both by themselves and by others.

It is important to distinguish the term 'Ethnic Group' from ethnic origin, or racial origin, which is not self-assigned. Ethnic origin is used in medicine to describe the genetic make-up of a person.

Ethnic group is not determined by another individual, but is the individual's own perception of themselves in response to all the cultural and other factors making up ethnic group.

## **Why do we need to record it?**

The National Health Service needs to know the ethnicity of patients for the purpose of providing better health care. It must make sure that all sectors of the community have equal access to the services provided. The information will make it easier to manage care plans, protocols and outcomes.

It is hoped that the improved data will lead to providing more services specifically targeted to the local community and to improve accessibility.

The ethnic category must be collected or validated, at the first contact with the patient and immediately recorded on PAS.

## **How do we record this for those unable to respond?**

Most hospitals will have procedures for the situations in which it is difficult to obtain information from patients; Ethnic group data is only one item of

information amongst others. In the case of the very young, a parent or guardian should be invited to respond. **Note, they should not be recorded with the Ethnic group of the mother.** Where patients are temporarily confused or traumatised, it is more appropriate to collect the data later in the admission. In the case of the permanently confused patients this information should be gathered from a relative or advocate.

A code of 'V' is to be applied if the patient declines to provide the information and a code of 'T' applied if the patient is too unwell to ask. However, use of these codes will be audited and monitored as neither code is accepted by the Healthcare Commission as being valid.

## **Is it mandatory for the patient to respond?**

No. There is no obligation to respond to the Ethnic group question. From samples available, non-responders may vary between 1% and 5%. If you are in need of additional guidance and support or have further unanswered questions please contact the Information Governance Lead for your Trust.

Online URL: <https://elearning.cornwall.nhs.uk/site/kb/article.php?id=36>