

Well Pharmacy Data Breach Information

Background

In December 2018, a data breach at Well pharmacy occurred in which the Professional Resourcing Team, part of the Superintendent's Office, emailed a spreadsheet containing the data of 24,099 people, mostly pharmacists. Well has informed us that the email was sent to 1,050 people, of whom 376 were potentially able to access the spreadsheet. The breach may be relevant to any pharmacist who has ever worked for or provided locum services to Well (or a predecessor company) since at least as far back as 2003. Each affected pharmacist may be entitled to compensation, possibly ranging from hundreds to the low thousands of pounds, depending on individual circumstances and facts. The breach occurred on 11 December and came to light to the PDA through social media. The PDA immediately began the process of taking expert legal advice and is supporting an increasing number of members who have contacted us about this issue.

Well has advised the PDA that it has sent an email to all those for whom it had a valid email address. Well also advised us that it has used the services of a secure external mailing house to validate addresses and send letters to everyone else.

What did the spreadsheet contain?

The spreadsheet contained 24,099 rows of data, each row being the record for one person. These people were mainly locum and employee pharmacists and a small number of non-pharmacist staff members. It is unclear to the PDA why such sensitive data was held in this easily-shared format rather than in a restricted corporate database. Well say this was shared due to a human error. From information supplied to us by Well, we know that there were 68 columns of data, with an average of 28 columns completed per person. The data in the spreadsheet includes names, address, phone numbers, email addresses and payroll numbers.

The data in the spreadsheet also includes, amongst other things:

Locum hourly rates (including premium rates, Saturday rates and holiday rates)
Whether or not the pharmacist will work with an ACT, the distance they're willing to travel and what services they can provide.

A column entitled "Reason for Inactivation" including almost 6,000 entries, which could potentially have the unintended consequence of amounting to a "blacklist" of individuals. This is denied by Well, who say that at no time has it ever operated a "blacklist" or would ever consider such improper practice.

34 different "Reasons for Inactivation" for individuals, which it appears could be selected from a defined list. The reasons used include the following:

- Being Investigated speak to PST
- Business Risk

- Ex-employee – dismissed
- Health Concerns
- Maternity leave
- Branch feedback
- RDM feedback
- Inappropriate behaviour [it is not known what this is based on]
- Fitness to Practice Issue [Well has stated this was captured from the GPhC website]
- Datix feedback
- Don't use in busy branches
- Payment Rates/Overclaiming Unreliable Locum (ORPD)
- Details of whether a person is a key holder, has CRB clearance, or has religious requirements (Yes or No fields)
- A free type comment field including comments made about 500 of the people on the spreadsheet.