

Guidance on unique patient identifiers

The ROOT collects information about individuals using an identifier, which needs to be unique, but not reveal the patient's 'real world identity'.

The ROOT does not generate the identifier: this is created and managed by the service/organisation submitting the data. There are no specific 'rules' for what can or cannot be used, this is at the discretion of each service/organisation. It is likely that individuals responsible for information governance in the organisation will be involved in the decision.

If clients are already assigned an identifier by another means, it is preferable to use this, because it avoids duplication and should already be stored in a secure system, for reference. For example, some SLT services use:

- An admin number assigned to individual, such as at the point of referral
- A number automatically generated by another system/database (e.g. electronic notes system)
- Caseload number or similar

Where this is not an option, some SLT services using the ROOT have developed a bespoke method of generating an ID number specifically for this purpose, or using an agreed approach to systematically allocate an identifier to patients e.g. department code, followed by SLT initials, followed by date of referral (e.g. AP-KM-270721). In these cases, it may be necessary to create a securely-held bespoke spreadsheet to log the identifiers, so they can be linked back to patient records.

Key principles:

- Each identifier must be unique, with no risk of the same identifier being assigned (accidentally) to two clients
- Identifiers must not reveal the patient's 'real world identity' if seen by those outside of the service/organisation.
- The 'key' to decoding the identifiers need to be kept securely, but with easy access for those who need it, for example a new therapist taking over a client (i.e. stored on the patient record or caseload management system, or within a bespoke spreadsheet or similar).

For more information, please consult the ROOT Information Governance Pack.