

FARSITE System Overview

What is FARSITE?

FARSITE is a tool for searching, finding, and contacting patients with research opportunities, whilst still preserving their confidentiality. It enables GPs to decide whether their patient should be contacted to be invited to participate in a specific research study.

FARSITE has been developed by NorthWest EHealth (NWEH) - a trusted partner of the NHS. It is used by your local clinical research network and GPs who want an easier way to get involved with research.

How do researchers use FARSITE?

The principle behind **FARSITE** is to maintain patient confidentiality by anonymising the information given to researchers, and only allowing GPs to decide whether their patient should be contacted. Cohorts of less than 5 are not returned in search results.

Researchers do not have access to individual patient records – information about individuals who meet the criteria for a protocol is only available to the patient's GP practice. Practices can only access data originating from their practice.

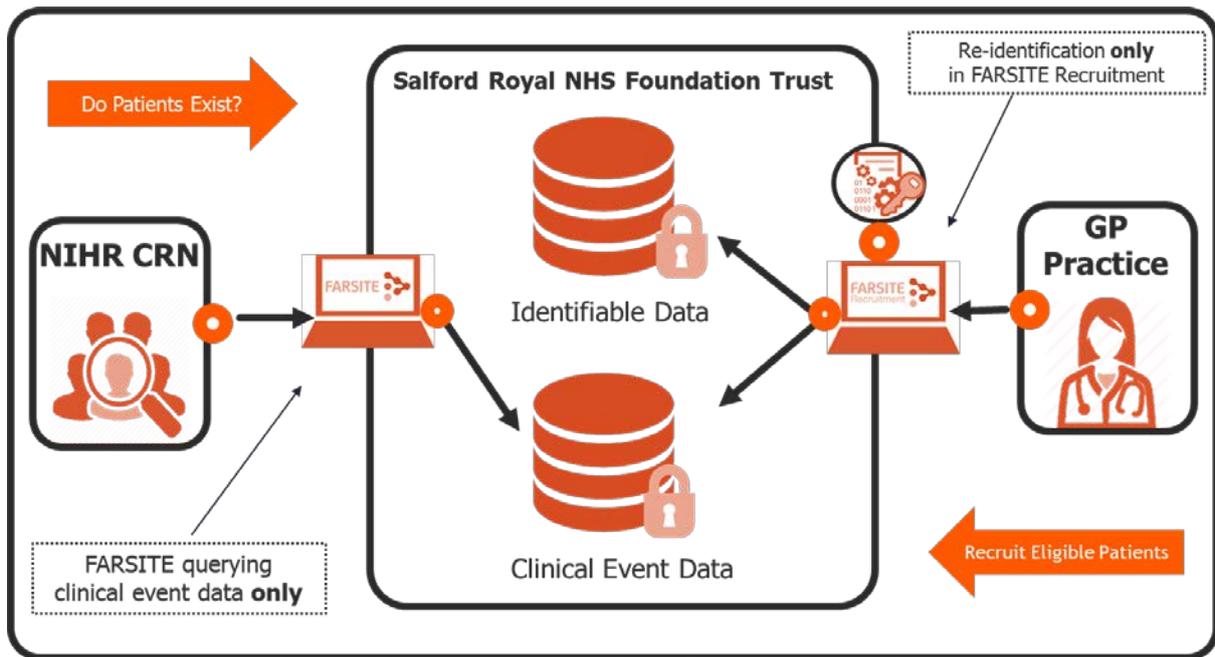
Researchers use the **FARSITE Feasibility** view which contains anonymised data during the initial stages of recruitment to see: how many patients match a trial protocol; the number of patients matching each criterion; or the number belonging to each registered GP practice. When the researcher is ready to recruit for a trial they use **FARSITE** to contact selected GP practices.

The **FARSITE Recruitment** view gives control for trial recruitment to the GP. Email prompts are sent to the practice when a new trial is available, or practice staff can log into **FARSITE Recruitment** and check to see if new studies are available. They can then use **FARSITE Recruitment**, when it is convenient, to review study documentation and the re-identified patients. **FARSITE Recruitment** is flexible: GP practices are not obliged to participate and can choose the trials with which they wish to engage.

As part of the recruitment process, the researcher creates an invitation letter template for the study and the necessary documentation including: consent form, information sheet, study protocol, and ethics approval. These are made available to the GP when they decide to engage with a trial.

How does FARSITE work?

A researcher inputs the protocol for a clinical trial; this is then matched to eligible patients who can be contacted by their own GP via the automated Docmail system. The researcher doesn't have access to individual patient records. Identifiable details of the patients that meet the criteria for a protocol are only available to the patient's GP practice, providing local ownership and control. The GP shares patient contact details with Docmail in order to send out invitation letters to patients they think may be interested in participating in research.



Is it safe?

The System Level Security Document explains in detail what data is extracted, how it is processed, and the technical and operational safeguards NWEH have in place. FARSITE has been reviewed by the National Information Governance Board (NIGB) and the system is currently in use in over 250 practices.

Does it work with all GP systems?

It works with all major GP clinical systems including Vision, TTP System One, EMIS LV, and EMIS Web.

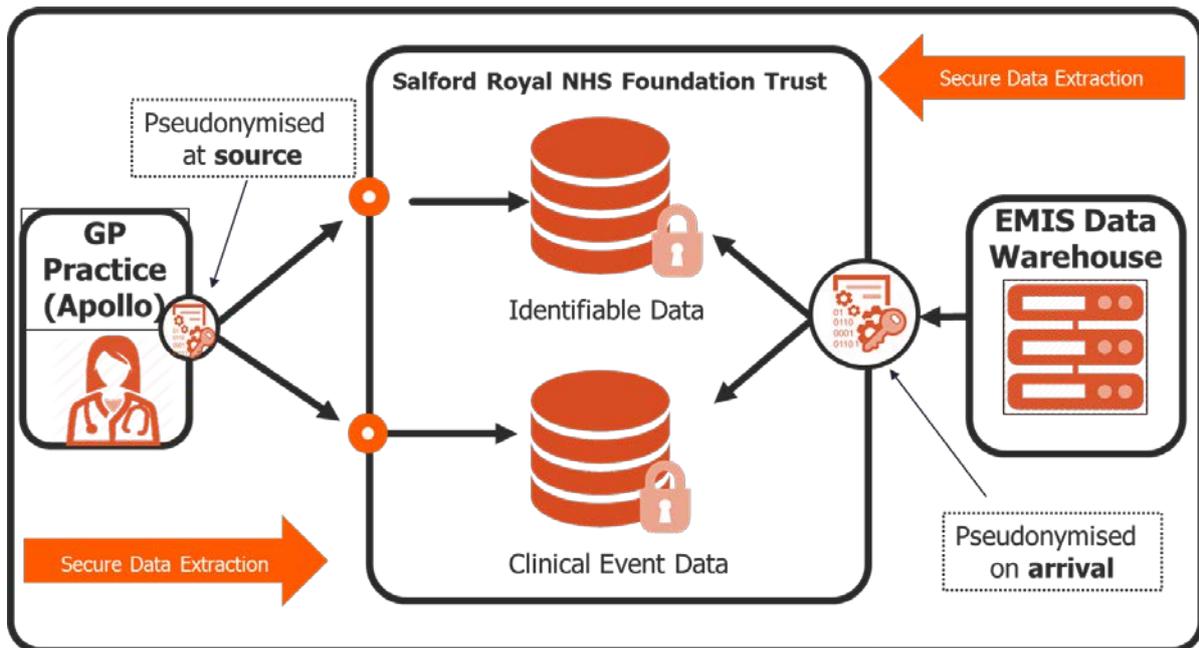
My system does this anyway – what’s the benefit for me?

GPs don’t have to run the searches: these are run centrally, saving time and effort. The e-fulfilment service Docmail, which automatically produces invitation letters, hugely reduces the administration burden for GPs.

The Department of Health and the NHS Constitution Handbook calls for every patient to have access and opportunities to participate in to research that may be of particular relevance to them – FARSITE supports GPs to do this.

Who sees patient identifiable data?

All identifiable records are seen only by the GP as the data controller, and a handful of NWEH and SRFT technical staff by exception to maintain the FARSITE system. Researchers see only de-identified records, as the datasets are held in two different databases stored securely on the N3 NHS network.



Note: where the diagram above states the data is pseudonymised, this applies to data held within the databases. Research staff do not have access to databases, only the web application within which all data is anonymised.

Do you keep those records indefinitely?

Once the GP signs up to **FARSITE**, data is usually extracted on a monthly basis. If the GP no longer wishes to participate, the practice is removed from **FARSITE** upon their request. NWEH also have additional technical safeguards in place to stop out-of-date data being used in recruitment. This avoids unnecessary work for GPs and safeguards against contact being made with patients who are no longer eligible for a trial.

Who profits from using this data?

NWEH is a company whose shareholders are the University of Manchester and Salford Royal Foundation Trust. **FARSITE** was created to speed up research feasibility and recruitment - saving GPs time and allowing treatments to be tested and improving patient outcomes.

Are there costs associated?

FARSITE is currently funded as a local initiative to improve patient access to research; there are no direct costs to a GP practice. The CRN are also here to support you with research and help you understand how to get the best out of the system.

How do I sign up?

Contact NWEH for more information on the process or read **FARSITE member information and sign up** (FAR-DOC-020) - also contained in the GP information pack.