

Glossary

The glossary below explains some of the most common terms used by the agency.

Agency: The Privacy Act 1993 defines ‘agency’ broadly to include both government agencies and private sector organisations. In these FAQs ‘agency’ has been used to refer to government agencies and NGO has been used to refer to non-governmental organisations providing social services.

Approved information sharing agreement: Allows personal information to be shared between or within agencies and providers without intruding on individuals’ rights, for the purpose of delivering public services. Find out more([external link](#)) about approved information sharing agreements.

Confidentialisation: Applies statistical methods to information to reduce the risk that an individual, household, or organisation can be identified in the information. This can be done by combining responses into broader categories, as explained by Statistics NZ([external link](#)).

Data: Facts and statistics collected for reference or analysis. Data may be qualitative (information that describes a topic rather than measuring it – for instance stories, opinions, attitudes or impressions) or quantitative (facts that can be measured and written down using numbers).

De-identification / anonymisation: The process of removing specific information from people’s data to reduce the risk of any individual, household or organisation being recognised in that data. De-identification typically includes, but is not limited to, removing names, exact dates of birth or death, and exact addresses. How much de-identification is needed depends on the nature of the data, its planned use, and the surrounding processes governing access to and use of that data.

Information matching agreements: An agreement which allows comparison of one set of records with another, to find records in both sets of data that relate to the same person. These agreements are subject to controls under the Privacy Act. Find out more([external link](#)) about information matching agreements.

Linked data sets / data linking: Personal information in existing data sets can be used to link the datasets together. This results in a richer dataset which creates opportunities for more complex and expanded research. For example, data linking helped to identify the role of folate in pregnancy in reducing neural tube defects, such as spina bifida.

NGO: A non-governmental organisation that is funded or part-funded by government to provide social services.

Personal information: Information that can be used to identify a specific person. The Privacy Act defines it as information about an identifiable individual.

Secondary collection: When data is collected by government from NGOs or other government agencies, rather than collected directly from the individual concerned. Some of it will be personal information, some of it will not be. This information is collected to determine eligibility for some services, understand more about service users’ needs, what services they are receiving and what difference the services are making.

Service provider: Government agencies, NGOs and private organisations that provide social services.

Service user: A person who uses social services.

Working paper – on-going work to facilitate discussion and debate about policy and research topics