

**For Information**

**Preparing for Release 2 of the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS)**

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The purpose of this communication is to raise awareness of the proposed stages of implementation and to alert PCTs of the need to prepare for the Foundation Stage.

The delivery of the new NHS Electronic Prescription Service is entering a critical phase with the transition from EPS Release 1 to EPS Release 2. The technical infrastructure to support EPS was introduced in Release 1 and that phase is now nearing completion. EPS Release 2 provides enhanced functionality which provides benefits for patients, healthcare professionals and the NHS. The EPS Release 2 Business Process Guidance Documentation provides detailed information on the functionality available with EPS Release 2. This Guidance can be found on the NHS Connecting for Health (CFH) EPS web site:

<http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/systemsandservices/eps>

During this transition, there is a need for a structured, progressive and patient-focussed approach whilst maintaining a level playing field for dispensing contractors.

Local and national process and governance frameworks need to be in place to support this approach:

Outlined in the NHS Operating Framework 09/10, PCT commissioners have to plan and execute the enablement of EPS to realise the local benefits of EPS. Thus:

- PCT and SHA EPS governance arrangements need to be put in place locally that has responsibility to approve the progression of the PCT through the various stages of implementation. An important part of this process is to ensure discussion with and involvement of local stakeholders such as LMCs and LPCs.
- Drawing on national guidance, local policies need to be developed, including a patient enablement strategy, nomination policy and business continuity plan.

Nationally, the framework includes:

- Legislative provisions whereby a PCT must be included in Secretary of State Directions before a prescriber in that PCT can apply an advanced electronic signature to an electronic prescription (EPS Release 2). A statutory notice period of three months shall be given before any PCT is added to the 17 PCTs already listed in the Directions. This will allow dispensing contractors to be informed about the future activities of prescribers

in their area and have an opportunity to respond with regards to becoming EPS R2 compliant. It is important to note that here is no restriction on any dispensing contractor wishing to implement an EPS Release 2 dispensing system that has been accredited for “full roll out approval” (FRA) by NHS Connecting for Health. A compliant EPS Release 2 system is also able to process EPS Release 1 messages.

- SHA sponsorship of the PCT for Secretary of State Directions based on agreed SHA criteria.
- Implementation Guidance, published by NHS CFH, based upon lessons learnt from the initial implementation (pilot) sites, to support PCT commissioners.

In order to support the NHS to progress locally, and work within the national framework, NHS CFH have divided the EPS “*path to live*” into a number of logical stages to provide transparency of the progression of EPS enablement nationwide.

- Stage 1: The Foundation Stage
- Stage 2: Preparing for EPS Enablement (Obtaining Secretary of State Direction)
- Stage 3: Initial Enablement of EPS
- Stage 4: EPS Operating as Business as Usual

Pharmacy systems that account for over 75% of the pharmacy market will start to achieve “Full Rollout Approval (FRA)” in late 2009 and early 2010. It is anticipated that FRA for all pharmacy suppliers will be completed by the end of 2010. In addition, there is an incentive for dispensing contractors to deploy an EPS Release 2 dispensing system to claim their *EPS Deployment Allowance* as part of the contractual framework for pharmacy.

It is therefore important that PCTs consider the activities of the Foundation Stage now. It is possible that dispensing system suppliers will deploy EPS Release 2 systems in community pharmacies before/as PCTs have reached/are reaching the Foundation Stage. NHS CFH therefore encourages PCTs have their Foundation Stage documents reviewed by their NHS Connecting for Health Interface Managers and/or SHA EPS Lead prior to gaining local approval for the PCT to support the deployment of EPS Release 2 dispensing systems.

To assist with planning, supplier status information can be found at:

<http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/systemsandservices/eps/staff/supplierstatus>

**Stage 1, the Foundation Stage** requires the PCT to have the following policies, procedures and other supporting elements completed:

1. A named EPS Lead that will work with the PCT commissioners and the SHA EPS Lead, the NHS CFH Interface Manger and appropriate individuals within the local healthcare community to lay the foundations for the introduction of EPS.
2. All dispensing contractors and GP practices in the PCT are notified of the contact details of their PCT EPS Lead

3. A governance structure is in place for EPS with the ability to approve relevant policies and procedures and drive the deployment, enablement and realisation of benefits. It is important, as part of this, to ensure discussions with and involvement of local stakeholders such as LMCs and LPCs.
4. An EPS Release 2 Smartcard distribution and transition policy in place for pharmacies and, if applicable, local dispensing appliance contractors.
5. A local PCT nomination policy. The NHS (Primary Medical Services) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the NHS (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2005 make provision for the introduction of nomination. This is supported by a number of principles that have been established nationally. These must be communicated and taken account of through the PCT Nomination Policy.
6. A process to distribute the new dispensing token stationery.
7. A local business continuity plan. Business continuity arrangements/processes for different scenarios need to be in place for the local health care professionals using EPS R2. National options have been identified (see Business Process Guidance); these need to be considered locally.
8. A local stakeholder and communications strategy.
9. A PCT wide deployment plan (At this stage, this may simply be a very short, statement giving a broad timescale for anticipated prescriber deployment in order to inform dispensing contractors of the status of their local prescribers. This plan will need to be developed iteratively over time.)

Further details on the other stages of implementation are contained in the NHS CFH document, *“EPS Implementation Strategy Phase 3, Stages of Implementation”* to be circulated to all SHA CIOs, SHA EPS Leads and PCT EPS Leads Detailed EPS Release 2 implementation guidance will also be published on the NHS CFH EPS web site.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me or the relevant NHS CFH National Interface Manager for the Electronic Prescription Service.

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November 2009