



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health Department
Primary Care Division

St Andrew's House
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Dear Colleague

COMPLETION OF PROGRAMME TO UPGRADE ALL GP COMPUTER SYSTEMS TO RFA SCOTLAND ACCREDITATION STANDARD

Background

1. The National IM & T strategy includes at Programme T12.3 the following target:

'From 2001 ensure through accreditation process (RFA) and reimbursement programmes that modern GP practice IT support systems are in place in all practices and are as a matter of course being used to support the clinical process, optimise care to patients and improve administration within NHS Scotland.'

2. The strategy also emphasised under Programme 7.2 the critical importance of rolling out the use of the Community Health Index (CHI) in all clinical communications and in particular to achieve this by completion of the "starring" and installation of electronic patient registration progressively over the period to March 2003 through the PARTNERS programme.
3. To expedite completion of these objectives the Department launched in November 2002 a procurement to enable the upgrade of the then remaining circa 150 GP systems in use across Scotland which were non RFA Scotland accredited and in some cases non PARTNERS compatible including the computerisation of the few remaining practices without this facility.

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Addresses

For action
Finance Directors,
NHS Boards and Trusts

For information
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4. The procurement is focussed on identifying systems which have a clear development path to comply with:
 - future standards for GP systems accreditation;
 - the emerging needs of pilots on existing Scottish initiatives already being rolled out or likely to be so within the coming 12 months period but not formalised in the existing RFA Scotland v.1 specification; and
 - amendments required to cater for likely changes arising from any new GP contract.
5. Responses to the procurement have now been evaluated and call off contracts are being established to allow those GP practices still to upgrade to RFA Scotland accreditation standard (including where not already in place PARTNERS accreditation) to put in hand early steps to do so. A list of the qualifying suppliers is included at **Annex A** and the details of the contracts for each commercial supplier are available from Iain Murray at Scottish Healthcare Supplies (SHS). The list includes the accreditation status as advised on 3 February by Newell and Budge (the accrediting body). Suppliers who have yet to be formally accredited but whose credentials have otherwise found to be acceptable have been included in the list. This is on the basis that they are actively seeking accreditation and will address expeditiously any deficiencies found during the accreditation process at no further costs to the GP practice concerned or NHS Scotland.
6. To facilitate early and informed decision making the following measures have been put in hand:
 - all suppliers are being provided with lists and contact details of the practices understood to either have systems which require software upgrades or which are not computerised. It will then be for each Primary Care Trust/Island Health Board to assist practices in making decisions as to which system to upgrade by outlining potential implications both for the practice and local IM & T strategies;
 - a seminar has been organised to take place on Thursday 27th February at the Business Learning and Conference Centre of Lauder College, Dunfermline to enable practices who wish to do so to see systems in operation. Arrangements for the seminar are included at **Annex B**;
 - based on the advice of the listed suppliers a core specification of hardware required has been developed for single site operation and is available from Ron Anderson (contact details below);
 - Mr Knox's letter of 17 December 2002 advised that central funding would be available to support the programme to upgrade non RFA Scotland v.1 systems in use in GP practices. Sums up to the totals detailed in **Annex C** have therefore been earmarked for the purpose of hardware upgrade and licence updating and any associated installation or commissioning costs and to reflect known distribution of practices without RFA accredited systems at the launch of the procurement; and
 - the same letter indicated that funds had been retained to provide for the provision of software and printers to enable bar-coding including CHI number of lab samples in GP practices. Discussion with the supplier has established no advantage is gained by a single central purchase; software is £100 per practice and printers are available from SHS contracts. Accordingly funds will be allocated in accordance with Annex

C. The number of printers required by each practice will vary. Precise needs should be assessed locally and Primary Care Trusts/Island Health Boards should consider augmenting as necessary the funding provided here.

Funding

7. Whilst the provision of GP IM&T is normally a matter for the reimbursement arrangements under the GP computer scheme, the current strategic situation represent abnormal circumstances which are best and exceptionally addressed by 100% central funding and central procurement organisation.

Action

8. NHS Boards/Trusts should:

- encourage those practices eligible under this programme to come to an early view as to the application software system to which they wish to upgrade. The decision as to the system to be used is one for the practice to take but drawing on advice from NHS Boards/Trusts on local policies and the implication of any decision both for the practice and for the wider local health economy. NHS Boards/Trusts should advise that in making their decision practices consider the relative merits of the proposals of at least one supplier other than their current one;
 - make arrangements for immediate upgrade of hardware for practices covered by the programme as necessary. Quite separately from the issue of choosing application software it is likely that all or most of the practices concerned will require upgrades to their hardware and operating and utility licences. Progress with these upgrades can be made now as all software suppliers use a similar basic hardware specification which is in fact below the currently available market specification. Upgrade to the hardware will not therefore prejudice choice of application software systems. SHS are aware of this requirement and of the appropriate hardware specification;
 - provide appropriate advice to remaining non computerised practices so that they are positioned quickly to take advantage of IM & T to more effectively fulfil their clinical and administrative responsibilities including the prospective requirements of the new GP contract . It should be possible to deal with the hardware requirements of such practices within the funds indicated in Annex C for non RFA Scotland v.1 system practice upgrades; and
 - review with any practices, who have not yet taken the necessary actions to implement PARTNERS, any reasons for not doing so and advise Stephen Tither (contact details below) of any cases where dates for implementation cannot be agreed with the practices.
9. Please indicate to Charlie Knox (Charles.Knox@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) that you will be able to use the funds in this financial year as intended. An appropriate adjustment to NHS Board allocations will then be made. Orders for the hardware should be placed with suppliers selected from the SHS hardware framework contract.
10. Hardware plans should ensure appropriate access for all members of the extended primary care team working from each practice.

11. Where possible, roll out programmes should be tailored to allow the earliest possible completion of the PARTNERS roll out programme.
12. This programme is predicated on a discrete site upgrade programme to upgrade legacy systems and to provide a robust platform for the development of functionality required both for existing initiatives and the likely demands of the next GP contract. Where GP practices are content to do so, and NHS Boards/Trusts consider that it would represent a more effective solution a multi-site 'enterprise' type solution may be pursued with the full costs met from this initiative. Further details if required on appropriate hardware standards for this option may be obtained from Ron Anderson (contact details below).

Implications for GP practices with RFA Scotland v.1 accredited systems

13. This programme of software upgrades does not affect GP practices who already use one of the RFA Scotland v.1 accredited systems listed in Annex A.
14. NHS Boards/Trusts should however in parallel develop plans that ensure that those systems are also running on similar hardware standards to those underpinning this initiative and that all relevant software licenses are up to date. Funding for this may be drawn from the provision for primary care upgrades outlined in Mr Knox's letter of 17 December 2002 to enable this operation to be completed as soon as possible.

The 'new' GP contract

15. The full detail of the new GP contract will be published in due course and will be subject to a ballot of all GPs. Future arrangements for GP computer systems provisioning and support will be finalised with GP representatives in the light of the outcome of this process. As already mentioned it is expected that this upgrade programme will ensure that NHS Scotland GPs all have a robust IT base from which to meet the developing demands of any new contract.

Further advice

16. This programme will be co-ordinated by the following:
 - hardware specifications should be addressed to Ron Anderson, CSA; e-mail Ron.Anderson@isd.csa.scot.nhs.uk
 - details of contracts with suppliers should be addressed to Iain Murray, SHS, email Iain.Murray@isd.csa.scot.nhs.uk;
 - PARTNERS roll out programme should be addressed to Kathryn Stolarek, e-mail Kathryn.Stolarek@psd.csa.scot.nhs.uk ; and
 - GP IM & T policy should be addressed to Stephen Tither, e-mail Stephen.Tither@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

Advice to practices affected

17. NHS Boards/Trusts are advised as a matter of urgency to share the contents of this Circular with all GP practices still to upgrade to a RFA Scotland v.1 standard, non computerised practices, and practices still to agree dates with the PARTNERS team for implementation of that programme. It should also be copied to LHCCs and the GP sub-committee of the AMC.

C KNOX
Computing & IT Strategy Division

H WILSON
Primary Care Division

RFA SCOTLAND v.1 UPGRADE PROGRAMME

QUALIFYING SUPPLIERS	SYSTEM	RFA SCOTLAND ACCREDITATION STATUS
Torex Health	Premiere Synergy	Accredited
Egton Medical Information Systems	EMIS Primary Care System (PCS) version GV 2.1	Booked for testing
Protechnic Exeter	Exeter GP system with sVOLVE Internet Browser	Accredited
Healthy Software	Healthy GP ver 3.0	Not yet booked for testing
In Health	Gannymede 2002 v 1.2	Not yet booked for testing
In Practice systems	Vision version 3 release DLM 166	Booked for testing
GPASS	GPASS R 5	Accredited

RFA SCOTLAND v.1 UPGRADE PROGRAMME – DEMONSTRATION DAY

This annex provides detail of the demonstration day set up to allow NHS Boards/Trusts and GP general practice staff to assess the accredited systems on offer from both those companies participating in the procurement and from GPASS.

Four of the six companies currently have systems in use in Scotland. The remaining two currently only have systems in England but have indicated their willingness to gain accreditation in Scotland. The names of the companies participating are noted below along with the addresses of their web-sites which may be accessed to obtain more information.

The demonstration day has been set up at the Business Learning and Conference Centre of Lauder College in Dunfermline on Thursday, 27 February 2003. The Centre is located less than 2 minutes from Halbeath Junction (Junction 3) of the M90, following the signs for Dunfermline, and there is parking available on site. Demonstration facilities will be set up at the Centre with a series of timed demonstrations scheduled for the day starting at 9.30 a.m. and ending at 8 p.m. The format of the demonstrations will be decided by the individual companies with each demonstration lasting at most 90 minutes. All six of the companies, plus GPASS, will be in attendance throughout the day to provide demonstrations and to respond to queries.

By the end of the demonstration day, it is hoped that practices will have a clearer idea of their preferred systems and that a final tender process can be undertaken for each bidding company to obtain the best prices. Each NHS Board/Trust should co-ordinate the requirement in its area, notifying Iain Murray at ISSG (Iain.Murray@isd.csa.scot.nhs.uk) of the requirement for each supplier by Friday 7 March 2003 if possible.

While it is appreciated that this demonstration day is being organised at short notice, it is hoped that there will be sufficient interest to make it worthwhile. The occasion will provide PCT staff and Practice Managers with the opportunity to see and assess all of the systems which are either accredited or should shortly gain accreditation and thus help inform their decision.

To help in setting up the day, you are asked to provide an estimate of the numbers likely to attend by email to Carolyne Hand at Information Systems Support Group, carolyne.hand@isd.csa.scot.nhs.uk.

Note referred to:

Company	Web-site address	Accreditation status
EMIS	http://www.emis-online.com	Accreditation booked
GPASS	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/gpass	Accredited
Healthy Software	www.healthysoft.com	
In Health	www.inhealthsolutions.co.uk	
In Practice Systems	www.inps.co.uk	Accreditation booked
Protechnic Exeter Ltd	www.protechnic-exeter.co.uk	Accredited
Torex	http://www.torexhealth.co.uk	Accredited

**RFA SCOTLAND v.1 UPGRADE PROGRAMME
MAXIMUM SUMS AVAILABLE TO HEALTH BOARDS/PRIMARY CARE TRUSTS TO FACILITATE**

		Non RFA (Scot.) Hardware And Licence Upgrades (A)	Purchase Of Software Licence And Printers For Bar-coding Lab Test Requests (B)		Total (C)
NHS Board	NHS Trust	£k	£k	No Of Printers	£k
Argyll & Clyde	Renfrew & Inverclyde	28	49 ⁽¹⁾	195 ⁽¹⁾	133
	Lomond & Argyll	56			
Ayrshire & Arran		70	40	171	110
Borders		Nil	14	57	14
Dumfries & Galloway		140	18	73	158
Fife		210	36	147	246
Forth Valley		28	34	142	62
Grampian		410	54	228	464
Greater Glasgow		182	105	418	287
Highland		283	29	107	312
Lanarkshire		196	54	221	250
Lothian	Lothian	224	77 ⁽²⁾	321 ⁽²⁾	385
	West Lothian	84			
Orkney		28	6	21	34
Shetland		Nil	7	30	7
Tayside		227	40	163	267
Western Isles		84	8	34	92
Total		2,250	571		2,821

Note (1) Combined figure for Renfrewshire & Inverclyde and Lomond & Argyll Primary Care Trusts

(2) Combined figure for Lothian and West Lothian Primary Care Trusts

Trusts concerned to agree split in funding