



# Department of Health & Social Care

Department of Health and  
Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0EU

Amanda Pritchard  
Chief Executive  
NHS England

28 May 2024

Dear Amanda,

## 1. Healthcare Operational Data Flows Directions 2024

- 1.1 I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (**the Secretary of State**) to give Directions to **NHS England**.
- 1.2 These Directions are given in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 254(1), and 304(9), (10) and (12) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012<sup>1</sup> (**the 2012 Act**), and sections 13ZC and 272(7) and (8) of the National Health Service Act 2006<sup>2</sup> (**the 2006 Act**).
- 1.3 These Directions are to be known as the **Healthcare Operational Data Flows Directions 2024** and come into force on the date after the day on which they are signed.

## 2. Requirement for these Directions

- 2.1 In accordance with section 254(2)(b) of the 2012 Act, the Secretary of State considers that it is in the interests of the health service in England or of the

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 c.7 (the 2012 Act). Relevant amendments were made by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (Transfer of Functions, Abolition and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/98).

<sup>2</sup> 2006 c.41. Section 13ZC was inserted by section 45 of the Health and Care Act 2022 (c.31).

recipients or providers of adult social care in England for these Directions to be given.

2.2 In accordance with section 254(5) of the 2012 Act, the Secretary of State has consulted NHS England before giving these Directions.

2.3 In accordance with section 13ZC(5) of the 2006 Act, the Secretary of State considers these Directions to be in the public interest.

### 3. **Priorities, Policies and Non-Statutory Guidance**

In exercising functions under these Directions, NHS England must have regard to such priorities, policies and non-statutory guidance<sup>3</sup> of the Secretary of State as the Secretary of State may notify in writing from time to time to NHS England.

### 4. **Purpose**

4.1 The purpose of these Directions (**Purpose**) is to require NHS England to collect and analyse information in order to implement automated granular daily data collections to replace and rationalise existing, less regular local and national data flows, and national aggregated data collections, called SitReps. This will reduce the reporting burden on providers and provide more timely data for the purposes of the NHS, to enable improved data insights to be obtained in order to support NHS delivery plans for the recovery of elective care<sup>4</sup> and emergency and urgent care<sup>5</sup>. This would be in relation to recovering NHS waiting lists, care co-ordination and improvement in the quality and timeliness of healthcare operational data flows through the health and social care system.

4.2 The development and delivery of more timely data collections will support proactive and reactive reporting for local, regional and national decision-making across the health and adult social care pathway, including in secondary care and in community care services. This would also enable NHS England and Integrated Care Boards to manage the provision of, and oversee the management of, health services in England, including, but not limited to, acute, elective and virtual wards services.

### 5. **Establishing and operating information systems**

5.1 The Secretary of State directs NHS England to establish and operate a system for the collection and analysis of the information described in the related Requirements Specifications as referred to in section 5.2 below and to do so in accordance with those Requirements Specifications.

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<sup>3</sup>In addition, NHS England has a duty to have regard to [statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 274A of the 2012 Act: NHS England's protection of patient data, 23 May 2023](#), as the same may be updated from time to time.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/delivery-plan-for-tackling-the-covid-19-backlog-of-elective-care/>

<sup>5</sup> [NHS England » Major plan to recover urgent and emergency care services](#)

- 5.2 It is anticipated that there will be multiple collections within the scope of these Directions. Each collection will have a requirements specification, published alongside these Directions as may be updated periodically by the Secretary of State in consultation with NHS England (the **Requirements Specifications**).
- 5.3 The Requirements Specification published at the date of signing of these Directions is the Requirements Specification for Healthcare Operational Data Flows Directions 2024 – Acute Collection as updated periodically by the Secretary of State in consultation with NHS England.
- 5.4 The Secretary of State directs NHS England to analyse the information which NHS England obtains by complying with these Directions (**the Information**), as may be required by the Secretary of State or as NHS England considers necessary to achieve the Purpose.
- 5.5 Such analysis includes:
- 5.5.1 analysis by reference or linkage to any other information described in the related Requirements Specifications;
  - 5.5.2 analysis for data quality purposes, including undertaking comparison and consistency analysis of the same or similar information obtained by complying with other directions under section 254 of the 2012 Act or requests under section 255 of the 2012 Act;
  - 5.5.3 any other analysis of the information as NHS England considers appropriate to maintain data quality, accuracy and consistency in relation to the Information.
- 5.6 In exercising functions under these Directions, NHS England must act in accordance with the related Requirements Specifications and generally in such a way as to achieve the Purpose.

## 6. **Service Levels etc**

In exercising functions under these Directions, NHS England must act in accordance with the service levels, support and monitoring requirements, and the reporting and governance requirements notified by the Secretary of State in writing to NHS England as at the date these Directions come into force, or as those requirements are amended and notified by an authorised officer of the Department for Health and Social Care on behalf of the Secretary of State in writing to NHS England from time to time.

## 7. **Fees and Accounts**

NHS England must keep proper accounts, and proper records in relation to the accounts, in connection with these Directions.

## 8. Duration

NHS England must exercise functions under these Directions until they are revoked by a further direction in writing by an authorised officer of the Department of Health and Social Care on behalf of the Secretary of State.

## 9. Review of these Directions

These Directions will be reviewed from time to time. Any amendments to the Directions or the Specifications will only be made after consultation with NHS England.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. G. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State

Date signed: 28 May 2024