

DCB0084: OPCS-4.9 Implementation Guidance

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Information and technology
for better health and care

Data Coordination Board

This information standard (DCB0084) has been approved for publication by the Department of Health and Social Care under [section 250 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012](#).

Assurance that this information standard meets the requirements of the Act and is appropriate for the use specified in the specification document has been provided by the Data Coordination Board (DCB), a sub-group of the Digital Delivery Board.

This information standard comprises the following documents:

- Requirements Specification
- Implementation Guidance
- Change Specification.

An Information Standards Notice (DCB0084 Amd 18/2019) has been issued as a notification of use and implementation timescales. Please read this alongside the documents for the standard.

The controlled versions of these documents can be found on the [NHS Digital website](#). Any copies held outside of that area, in whatever format (e.g. paper, email attachment), are considered to have passed out of control and should be checked for currency and validity.

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Glossary of Terms

Term / Abbreviation	What it stands for
T&CDS	Terminology and Classifications Delivery Service, part of NHS Digital
CDS	Commissioning Data Sets
DCB	Data Coordination Board
ICD-10	International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems - Tenth Revision
NHS Digital	Provides national information, data and IT systems for health and care services, previously The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)
National Tariff Payment System	A set of prices and rules to help local NHS providers and commissioners provide best value to their patients produced by NHS England and NHS Improvement.
OPCS-4	The OPCS Classification of Interventions and Procedures - Version 4
PDF	Portable Document Format
SUS	Secondary Uses Service
TRUD	Technology Reference data Update Distribution Service
TSO	The Stationery Office
XML	Extensible Markup Language

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Purpose

This document signposts the user to the guidance available to support the implementation of the information standard - OPCS Classification of Interventions and Procedures, Version 4.9, also known as OPCS-4.9, which will be implemented on 1 April 2020.

This document identifies the relevant guidance for organisations and key members of staff who are required to implement the standard. It is also recommended that the full list of resources is referenced by all users as there may be other useful information.

Summary of the standard

Standard	
DCB unique identifier	DCB0084 Amd 18/2019
Title	OPCS Classification of Interventions and Procedures Version 4.9
Description	<p>The OPCS-4 Classification of Interventions and Procedures (OPCS-4) is an NHS fundamental information standard published under section 250 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (Ref DCB0084). OPCS-4 is updated every 3 years to reflect current NHS clinical practice to support aggregate data for statistical purposes and reimbursement.</p> <p>OPCS-4 is a statistical classification for clinical coding of hospital interventions and procedures undertaken by the NHS. The classification is mandatory for use by healthcare providers to support various forms of data collections for secondary uses.</p> <p>The classification comprises a list of alphanumeric codes organised into mainly anatomically based chapters. It is available to download as an eVersion and will be available online using the Classifications Browser. It is also published as a book set (Tabular List and Index) by The Stationery Office (TSO) for purchase by users.</p> <p>The Terminology and Classifications Delivery Service (T&CDS) has responsibility for the support, maintenance, development and licensing of the OPCS-4 which is governed by Crown Copyright.</p>
Applies to	<p>All Health Care Providers that are required to submit data on interventions and procedures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admitted Patient Care Commissioning Data Sets (CDS) Other data collections as defined in the NHS Data Model and Dictionary. <p>Implementation of the change to this information standard impacts all health IT systems suppliers providing systems to the above providers; such providers should work with their suppliers to determine necessary changes.</p>
Release	
Release title	OPCS Classification of Interventions and Procedures Version 4.9 (OPCS-4.9)

Description	OPCS-4.9 contains updates submitted by the NHS, NHS Digital, the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and NHS Improvement and other organisations via the OPCS-4 Requests Portal and released by the NHS Digital Terminology and Classifications Delivery Service.
Implementation Completion date	1 April 2020

Related documents

Ref #	Title
1	OPCS-4.9 Information Standards Notice
2	OPCS-4.9 NHS Data Model and Dictionary Change Request
3	Summary of Changes from OPCS-4.8 to OPCS-4.9
4	OPCS-4.9 Requirements Specification
5	OPCS-4.9 Change Specification

Supporting Information

Ref #	Title
1	OPCS-4.9 Codes and Titles and Metadata Files with associated Technical Specification
2	National Clinical Coding Standards – OPCS-4.9 reference book

Related Standards

Ref #	Reference	Title
1	SCCI0021	ICD-10 5th Edition
2	SCCI0034	SNOMED CT
3	DCB0160	Clinical Risk Management: its Application in the Deployment and Use of Health IT Systems
4	DCB0129	Clinical Risk Management: its Application in the Manufacture of Health IT Systems

Guidance for organisations

System/software suppliers

NHS IT system and software suppliers must build/update software to support NHS business functions and interoperability - according to new and existing contractual arrangements – to support local implementations in readiness for the go live date of 1 April 2020.

The OPCS-4.9 data files to support suppliers are released in two formats:

- Extensible Markup Language (XML) which is the required standard for the NHS, and
- Text file format. TRUD download data shows that this format continues to be widely used by system suppliers.

The XML schema/text file specification addresses the generation of OPCS-4 data from the data files for use within an application. It does not address formats required for interoperability with other services. Systems/software must comply with the guidance that regulates the submission of Commissioning Data Sets (CDS) to the [Secondary Uses Service \(SUS\)](#).

The data files must be implemented in accordance with the technical specification issued with the OPCS-4.9 Metadata file.

NHS IT system and software suppliers that support SNOMED CT enabled electronic patient care systems, use the SNOMED CT terminology to classifications map data files to support the semi-automated derivation of OPCS-4 and ICD-10. These data files are issued in March and September as part of the terminology release.

Software suppliers who supply encoders will need to update them in readiness for the go live date.

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

Health care providers

Health care providers must implement OPCS-4.9 data files in readiness for 1 April 2020 as described in the OPCS-4.9 Metadata file Technical Specification.

Information systems must support the coding of consultant episodes in OPCS-4.8 and OPCS-4.9 as part of the transition to the updated classification.

Health care providers need to undertake adequate planning and engage with their system suppliers, as well as information, coding and finance departments to ensure a smooth implementation for 1 April 2020. Potential problems can be mitigated with proper advance preparation to avoid compliance issues, coding backlogs, inaccurate data and incorrect reimbursement.

The benefits to be gained from the OPCS-4.9 updates depend upon:

- clear, concise and accurate clinical information provided within the episode of care to be coded in the care record.
- accurate, consistent and complete application of the classification to reflect the intervention detailed in the care record.

A PowerPoint presentation called “[OPCS-4.9 Implementation: Preparing for implementation](#)” is provided to support local implementers.

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

Clinical commissioning groups/Commissioning support units

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) use the OPCS-4.9 data to plan and buy services for their local community from any service providers that meet the required NHS standards and costs to support local health needs.

Clinical Commissioning Groups will need to implement OPCS-4.9 data files on 1 April 2020 as described in the OPCS-4.9 Metadata file technical specification.

The OPCS-4.9 Table of Coding Equivalences (ToCE) data file and associated specification supports analyses between different versions across time.

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

Key staff involved in implementation

Implementation lead

Organisations that are required to implement the changes must have someone with overall responsibility for successful implementation of updates to the standard. The updates to the clinical classifications are scheduled for release every three years and local implementers should have well-established implementation plans.

The NHS Digital Terminology and Classifications Delivery Service (T&CDS) publishes a checklist - [OPCS-4.9 Implementation: Preparing for implementation](#) - to help anyone planning for or managing the implementation in readiness for the go-live date of 1 April 2020.

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

ICT managers

ICT departments must support the day to day activities of clinical coders by enabling access to the Classifications Browser and or the successful download and installation of the OPCS-4.9 (and ICD-10) eVersion.

Electronic books and web-based applications are becoming the preferred options for the publication of clinical classifications worldwide. The NHS Digital Classifications Browser and eVersion will contain OPCS-4.9. They replicate the "look and feel" of the print version of OPCS-4.

The Browser will be free to access from any computer with an internet connection and the eVersion is free to download from [TRUD](#) reducing the necessity to purchase hard copies and to reduce local implementation costs.

The eVersion and Browser will have slightly different functionality as the Browser is still in development (see differences below) however the browser will eventually replace the eVersion.

Feedback from coding departments suggests that some clinical coders are unable to access the eVersion and other electronic media due to local security restrictions and delays to installation of software. ICT managers and clinical coding managers are encouraged to work together to resolve such impediments to the use of new technology.

It is expected that ICT departments will have liaised with clinical coding managers and have a schedule of activity in place to support the implementation of OPCS-4.9.

The eVersion:

- Reproduces the OPCS-4 Tabular List and Index in the familiar style
- Allows users to browse the classification with links from the Index to the Tabular List
- Has a powerful search
- Enables coders to email directly from the eVersion to colleagues
- Supports hyperlinks to documents and websites
- Allows users to add notes to codes which can be shared with colleagues and transferred between versions of OPCS-4
- Includes the ICD-10 classification

The Classifications Browser:

- Reproduces the OPCS-4.9 Tabular List and Index in the familiar style
- Allows users to browse the classification with links from the Index to the Tabular List
- Has a powerful search (including wildcard and fuzzy matches), search history, minimise and maximise search results, default search and search filter with ability to search the whole of the classification or specific parts
- Has downloadable reference books, High Cost Drugs Standards and List and Chemotherapy Regimens Standards and List from the landing page
- Has a page of resources
- Contains links to Rules, Conventions and Standards from OPCS-4 chapters, categories and codes (including links to High Cost Drugs Standards and List and Chemotherapy Regimens Standards and List). These are automatically updated when updated standards are released

Future enhancements to the Classifications Browser should include:

- Addition of ICD-10
- Addition of function to add notes to codes which can be shared with colleagues and transferred between future OPCS-4 versions, thus saving time on manual transcription of notes between books

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

Information analysts/statisticians

Information analysts/statisticians use the coded data to support operational and strategic planning, commissioning, and the National Tariff Payment System and to produce various mandatory statistical outputs.

The OPCS-4.9 Table of Coding Equivalences (ToCE) data file and associated technical specification support analyses between different versions across time.

The OPCS-4.9 ToCE file is released with the data files via the TRUD service.

Important Note: Updates to the classifications and coding standards must be implemented at the start of the fiscal year, i.e. 1 April, rather than potentially taking place at any point throughout the fiscal year, for example, 1 January. Having a regular fixed point for changes enables analysts to extract meaningful statistics for local/national purposes, including time series data and the NHS payment system.

Failure to comply means activity affected by the change will be incorrectly recorded. Inaccurate data places the trust at risk of incorrect payment and distorted clinical outcome indicators.

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

Clinical coding managers/clinical coders

OPCS-4.9 is used by clinical coders to classify procedures and hospital interventions to support various forms of data collection for operational and secondary uses. The codes are mandatory for Admitted Patient Care Commissioning Data Sets (CDS) and underpin the payment system for health care providers.

Clinical coders must provide accurate, consistent, complete and timely coding to enable the health care provider to meet the SUS data submission deadlines.

Existing clinical coders are already trained to use OPCS-4. They assign the codes according to the rules of the classification using information recorded in the source documentation by the clinicians. OPCS-4 may also be used by other staff depending on local operational requirements.

Where there are terminology enabled systems in place, procedures (and diagnoses) are captured in SNOMED CT and converted to the classifications via semi-automated maps. These maps are not always 1 to 1; consequently, the maps must be checked and supplemented by coders, as necessary.

An encoder, containing an electronic version of OPCS-4.9, may also be used to support the assignment of OPCS-4.9 codes.

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

Clinical coding trainers

Approved clinical coding trainers support the implementation of updates to the classifications. Within a local trust those responsible for clinical coding will find it beneficial to arrange awareness sessions for clinical personnel. Targeted training sessions can benefit those groups of staff and specialties impacted by the OPCS-4.9 update. This includes information, finance and other staff groups that use the data to support mandatory data collections as well as local service planning and delivery.

Local awareness materials for these staff groups can be based on the summary of changes, and the key learning points provided by the T&CDS.

Clinical coding managers need to ensure that all clinical coding staff receive adequate training so that the updates can be accurately and consistently applied as part of the coding process. The type of training will be dependent on local circumstances and the type and extent of the changes. The T&CDS provides national reference products and training materials to support the coding community.

See [Full list of guidance to support implementation](#).

Patient confidentiality

All staff accessing patient medical records for clinical coding purposes must abide by local and national confidentiality policies and codes of practice as a breach may lead to disciplinary action, a fine or, in the case of a breach of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, possible prosecution.

Guidance for data and information sharing at both operational and secondary uses levels exists nationally, for example:

- The NHS Confidentiality Code of Practice (2003)

This document is a guide to required practice concerning confidentiality and patients' consent to the use of their health records for those who work within or under contract to NHS organisations.

Your organisation's local Caldicott Guardian will be able to provide specific advice on any queries that you may have around patient confidentiality.

This should be reinforced during training.

Implementation costs

Overheads for the implementation of the new editions of both ICD-10 and OPCS-4 are catered for in the NHS Standard Contract.

Trusts need to ensure that resources are available to meet implementation costs which will include the necessary updating of IT systems and the cost of staff training.

The OPCS-4.9 volume set will be available from The Stationery Office (TSO). The cost to the NHS has yet to be decided. A discount will be available to the NHS. Currently the OPCS-4.8 volume set costs £150 without discount (a 70% discount is available for NHS). Further details will be published on Delen.

The NHS Digital Classifications Browser and eVersion are free.

NHS Digital provides the funding for the development, maintenance and resources to support the implementation of updates to OPCS-4.9.

Retention of previous versions of OPCS-4

Organisations should retain previous versions of OPCS-4 in order to decode historical data.

Full list of guidance to support implementation

Note: you may find it useful to refer to the implementation plan in the DCB0084 OPCS-4.9 Change Paper

Implementation Guidance/source	Format	Audience	Release date
Notification of Change	Newsletter	Health care providers	28 February 2019
Information Standards Notice	PDF	Clinical Commissioning Groups Commissioning Support Units	08 October 2019
See DCB documentation supporting standard here		NHS IT system and software suppliers	
Public consultation on Draft Summary of Changes OPCS-4.8 to OPCS-4.9	PDF	Anyone involved in implementing the standard	24 July 2019 – 19-August 2019
Online survey	On-line survey		
DCBI0084: OPCS-4.9 Change Paper	PDF	Anyone involved in implementing the standard	08 October 2019
DCB0084: OPCS-4.9 Requirements Specification			
DCB0084: OPCS-4.9			

Implementation Guidance NHS Data Model and Dictionary Change Request See DCB documentation supporting standard here			
Final Summary of Changes OPCS-4.8 to OPCS-4.9 Available via Delen.	PDF	Health care providers Clinical Commissioning Groups Commissioning Support Units NHS IT system and software suppliers Data analysts Clinical Coding Departments Clinical Coding Academies	08 October 2019
OPCS-4.9 Implementation: Preparing for implementation Available via Delen.	PowerPoint presentation	Anyone involved in implementing the standard	October 2019
OPCS-4.9 Codes and Titles Metadata files and associated specification Released via TRUD	XML Text file PDF	NHS and NHS IT system and software suppliers	4 November 2019
OPCS-4.9 Tables of Equivalences and specification Released via TRUD	XML MS Excel PDF	NHS and NHS IT system and software suppliers Data analysts Statisticians	4 November 2019
OPCS-4.9 Volumes 1-2 Available to purchase from The Stationery Office (TSO).	Hard copy	Clinical coding managers Clinical coders Clinical Coding Academies Data analysts Statisticians	January/Fe bruary 2020
OPCS-4.9 available in the Classifications Browser and eVersion	Online	NHS and NHS IT System and software suppliers Trust IT Department managers Clinical coding managers Clinical coders Clinical Coding Academies Data analysts	January/Fe bruary 2020

		Statisticians	
Key Learning Points Available via Delen.	PDF	Clinical coding managers Clinical coders Clinical Coding Academies Data analysts Statisticians	January/February 2020
National Clinical Coding Standards – OPCS-4.9 reference book Available via Delen and within the Classifications Browser.	PDF	Clinical coding managers Clinical coders Clinical Coding Academies Data analysts Statisticians	January/February 2020
Clinical Coding Standards Course materials Clinical Coding Standards Refresher Available via Delen	PDF PowerPoint Word	Approved Clinical Coding Trainers	January/February 2017
SNOMED CT to OPCS-4.9 cross-maps and associated documentation Released via TRUD	Tab separated text files PDF	NHS and NHS IT system and software suppliers	Mid-March 20120

Local assessment and assurance of compliance

The OPCS-4.9 Requirements Specification document describes generic tests that will demonstrate conformance to the standard.

NHS Digital maintenance and support

The T&CDS Product Support Helpdesk provides implementation support for classification updates and responses to queries related to OPCS-4 and ICD-10. Responses that are relevant to the wider coding community are published on the Query Resolution Database. Information on our Product Support Helpdesk and the Query Resolution Database can be found at https://hscic.kahootz.com/connect.ti/t_c_home/view?objectId=357060&exp=e1. See contact details below.

The T&CDS uses existing communication mechanisms to prepare users for the changes.

Targeted information is primarily issued in:

- Email bulletins to customers on mailing database.
- Alerts to TRUD users.
- Newsletters and Blogs posted on Delen
- Coding Clinic (technical journal) published on Delen, as required.
- Email bulletins to approved Clinical Coding Trainers and Clinical Coding Auditors.
- Briefings to coding forums / events / training courses.

Post-implementation feedback

DCB requires a post implementation review to be performed usually a year after implementation. This will help to identify local issues and inform improvements to subsequent releases. The Terminology and Classifications Delivery Service release a yearly Customer Survey which gathers feedback on OPCS-4 implementations and support.

Contacts

For further information about the T&CDS and OPCS-4.8 visit webpages:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/services/terminology-and-classifications/clinical-classifications>

https://hscic.kahootz.com/connect.ti/t_c_home/groupHome

For classifications and coding advisory support:

Tel: 0300 30 34 777

Email: information.standards@nhs.net

For further information about NHS Digital visit:

<http://digital.nhs.uk/>

For general enquiries please call **0300 303 5678** or email enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk