

DCB0028 Amd 45/2019

Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Implementation Guidance

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Data Coordination Board

This information standard (DCB0028) has been approved for publication by NHS England 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 Standards Assurance Service (DSAS) and approved by the Data Coordination Board (DCB).

This information standard comprises the following documents:

- Requirements Specification
- Change Specification
- Implementation Guidance.

An Information Standards Notice (DCB0028 Amd 45/2019) has been issued as a notification of use and implementation timescales. Please read this alongside the documents for the standard.

The controlled copies 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

A full Glossary of Terms for the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard can be found within the [Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Requirements Specification](#).

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Document

The following guidance is intended to support the implementation of the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard which is mandated for recording and collection from 1st April 2021. Further details of implementation dates are available in the *Requirements Specification*. This Fundamental Standard supplies the reference data, in the form of Treatment Function Codes (TFCs) and Main Specialty Codes that are used by other standards that mandate the collection and flow of activity data. As such, this Standard is referenced by multiple other Standards and thus this implementation guide is not comprehensive as many details are dependent on those Standards.

This document aims to ensure that all users are able to implement the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard in full by:

- providing guidance not available elsewhere, including a step-by-step guidance to key implementation activities found in section 3.4
- signposting additional detailed guidance, such as the Treatment Function Acceptance Criteria and the Treatment Function Maintenance Group (TFMG) Terms of Reference found [on the NHS Digital webpages](#) (see section 2.5 'Related Documents').

This document also includes information on a variety of topics that impact implementation of the relevant data items, such as information governance, training and ongoing maintenance.

Users should make use of this document when preparing a high-level picture of how their organisation intends to tackle this implementation to meet the anticipated timescales.

1.2 Scope of Document

This document provides guidance on how to implement the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard. This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- [Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Requirements Specification](#)
- [Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Change Specification](#)
- [Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Code List Specification](#)
- [TFMG Terms of Reference](#)
- [TFMG Treatment Function Acceptance Criteria](#)
- [NHS Data Model and Dictionary Treatment Function and Main Specialty Change Request](#).

1.3 Out of Scope of Implementation Guidance

The following areas are out of scope of this document:

- Detailed background and justification for the development of the Information Standard
- Restating detailed information already available in other documents.

2 Background

2.1 Overview

The Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard covers the respective classifications used to support the national reporting and analysis of clinical workforce activity throughout the NHS, through data sets such as the Commissioning Data Sets (CDS). Further information is contained within the *Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Specification*.

This standard applies to the NHS in England, very similar standards exist in other 'home nations' of the United Kingdom, however they are separately maintained by the appropriate bodies.

The former 'National Specialty List' standard was last updated in 2012. The specific aims of this update are to:

- improve data quality by introducing new TFCs for services that are not currently represented as a treatment function, enabling commissioning of new services that are not currently represented in the TFC list
- re-name treatment functions that are considered out-dated
- modify the definitions of treatment functions that are unclear or no longer accurate
- update the list of Main Specialties to ensure that the list is aligned with the relevant statutory instrument
- clarify the future scope of TFCs that represent specialised services
- update the criteria used to define TFCs
- update the standard's name
- define the future update process for TFCs.

2.2 Legal Basis

The Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard is a fundamental standard and will largely be implemented in other standards, such as CDS. The Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard therefore does not in itself mandate data collection. The data items TFC and Main Specialty Code appear in other NHS Digital collections and data sets which will adhere to Sections 254 and 259 of the Health and Social Care Act, which cover the legal basis for NHS Digital to receive, require, request and process information.

2.3 Information Standards Development Process

All approved new data standards, and changes to existing standards, are communicated to the providers and system suppliers through the publication of an ISN. These notices are published and available to view on the [Information Standards webpages](#), and also communicated to health and social care bodies via a monthly newsletter.

In addition, this Information Standard amendment has been put through rigorous assurance prior to approval by the Data Coordination Board (DCB). The resulting Standard has been assigned Release Number Amd 45/2019 and retains standard number DCB0028.

The Information Standard does not directly place any requirement on system suppliers to accommodate the updated TFC and Main Specialty Code lists within their systems. It is the service providers who must ensure that they have a system or systems to deliver the requirements specified in the standard. Providers are required to abide by the standard and can in turn mandate their IT Suppliers to make any necessary system changes via the contractual agreement between the two parties.

The Information Standard including latest amendments can be found [on the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard ISN webpage](#).

More information on the stages of information standard development is available on the [NHS Digital website](#).

2.4 Related Standards

Reference	Title
DCB0011	Mental Health Services Data Set (MHSDS)
DCB1513	Maternity Services Data Set (MSDS)
ISB0092	Commissioning Data Sets (CDS)
DCB0092-2062	Commissioning Data Sets: Emergency Care Data Set
ISB 0153	Critical Care Minimum Data Set
DCB2212	Drugs Patient Level Contract Monitoring
DCB3003	Patient Level Contract Monitoring
DCB2050	Aggregate Contract Monitoring
DCB2123	Patient Level Information and Costing Systems (PLICS) Data Set
SCCI2026	Female Genital Mutilation Enhanced Dataset
ISB0112	Inter-Provider Transfer Administrative Minimum Data Set
SCCI0034	SNOMED CT
SCCI0021	International Classification of Diseases

2.5 Related Documents

A comprehensive set of documentation has been developed by the NHS Digital Data Set Development Service (DSDS) for the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard. [The documents are provided on the NHS Digital's website](#). A breakdown of the individual products can be found below:

Document/Product	Description
<i>Information Standards Notice</i>	Notification of publication of a new or amended standard.
<i>Change Specification</i>	Outlines a list of changes made to the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Information Standard. For example, the addition of new codes, the renaming of existing codes and changes to the supporting definitions.

Document/Product	Description
<i>Requirements Specification</i>	<p>Outlines the scope of the Information Standard and the requirements necessary to conform to the standard and its scope.</p> <p>Gives an overview of the requirements for both care providers and systems, and associated conformance criteria (the tests that can be measured to assess whether the standard is being used correctly).</p>
<i>Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Code List Specification</i>	Specification showing the full list of TFCs and Main Specialty Codes which is part of the ISN and published on the DCB website.
<i>NHS Data Model and Dictionary Change Requests</i>	Provides a detailed technical specification of all changes made to the NHS Data Model and Dictionary as a result of the changes to this information standard. Both a Basic and Detailed (full) Change Request are published.
<i>Treatment Function Maintenance Group Terms of Reference</i>	Describes and defines the purpose, structure and scope of the TFMG, which considers and approves new TFCs and changes to existing TFCs. The TFMG performs the role of an Expert Reference Group.
<i>Treatment Function Maintenance Group Acceptance Criteria</i>	<p>A set of defined criteria against which requests for new TFCs or changes to existing Treatment Functions are considered.</p> <p>This document is not a controlled document of the information standard and is published separately.</p>
<i>Implementation Guidance (THIS DOCUMENT)</i>	A document containing guidance to support care providers and system suppliers with the implementation of the standard.

3 Organisational Guidance

The updated Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard may be used across a range of service providers and organisations that provide data for national data sets, and secondary users who utilise the data. This could include:

- Organisations who submit data to CDS, and other data sets which include the TFC or Main Specialty Code data items
- Third parties who supply the systems used to submit this data
- Data Access Request Service (DARS) customers who use CDS or other assets.

Health and care organisations and system suppliers should be aware of the requirements and conformance criteria specified for the standard. These are outlined in the *Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Requirements Specification* document.

3.1 Resources/Costs

No specific central resources or funding are provided by NHS Digital for the implementation of this standard. However, the resource requirements are minimal as the change relates to amended values within two data items, TFC and Main Specialty Code.

Providers and system suppliers should however expect some resource to be required in order to uplift systems to enable collection (and in the future, extraction) of the required data values.

The financial benefits of making the change include improved identification of specialised services and better reporting of certain areas of care so that they can be funded correctly, which should outweigh the small cost incurred to make the changes.

3.2 Information Governance

All data providers should be aware of their legal and professional obligations with regard to information governance as it applies to the mandated Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard, including with respect to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This includes the recording of data locally which is subject to any other restriction on disclosure e.g. by other laws or governance principles.

However, this fundamental standard does not mandate the flow of information.

Future data sets and collections which include the TFC and Main Specialty Code data items will adhere to relevant information governance legislation, including the provision of fair processing information and consent/national opt out as required.

General information about how NHS Digital looks after health and care information held by the organisation is available from [the NHS Digital website](#).

3.3 Data Quality

The Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard does not mandate design of local systems or specific local data quality measures. However, organisations collecting the data locally should ensure they have local governance arrangements in place to ensure good data quality, both in respect of data held on their system and in any future extracted submissions.

3.4 Step-by-Step Implementation Guide

The table below provides a high-level summary of essential steps for implementing the updated Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard within your organisation.

Step	Description
Understand the scope of the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard	Review this <i>Implementation Guidance</i> along with the <i>Requirements Specification</i> to fully understand the background, objectives and scope of this Information Standard.
Identify and engage with key stakeholders	Identify the key stakeholders for your Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard implementation and ensure they are aware of the requirement. For example, informatics staff responsible for updating systems and users of your data, in particular commissioners.
Understand the changes to the TFC and Main Specialty Code values	Review the <i>Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Code List Specification</i> and <i>Change Specification</i> to understand the changes to the value lists.
Decide how data values will be collected locally – Data Mapping.	Look more closely at each individual data value in the <i>Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Code List Specification</i> and check whether local systems already record this data, either directly or in a mappable value. Add the new values where required.
Enable extraction of the updated values	Ensure that your system(s) are able to extract the new values in the TFC and Main Specialty Code lists, in preparation for submission in national data sets or collections. In addition, consideration may need to be given to the continued extraction of the previous code lists to meet existing reporting requirements (see Section 5.4).
Keep up to date with future submission requirements	Keep up to date with other information standards which will subsequently include the updated TFC and Main Specialty Code lists via the NHS Digital website and notifications of updated releases. Submit the updated data as set out in relevant Information Standards, e.g. the forthcoming CDS v6.3.

4 Human Behavioural Guidance

Clinical and patient administration systems should be implemented by providers to allow the TFC and Main Specialty Code data items to be captured electronically, and outputs produced as required by other standards. It is the responsibility of care providers to ensure that their IT systems conform to this standard.

The changes to the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard should therefore be implemented by clinical and operational staff within provider organisations, as follows:

- **IT/system configuration staff:** will be responsible for configuring local systems to ensure that departments and services are assigned to the appropriate TFCs and Main Specialties. They may also be responsible for allocating clinics and admitting patients to the correct new values. They may also be involved in ensuring the system is user friendly, e.g. creating tooltips to allow users to have easy access to code definitions.
- **Clinical staff:** may be responsible for capturing information as part of the ongoing care of the patient i.e. for primary use purposes. This will include the relevant care activity to allow the relevant TFCs and Main Specialty Codes to be mapped to the activity.
- **Administrative staff:** are responsible for capturing information such as patient demographics and may be responsible for capturing information that requires mapping to TFCs and Main Specialty Codes on clinical systems, for example consultant information.
- **Clinical coders:** may be responsible for allocating specific activity within clinical records to the relevant TFCs.
- **Informatics staff:** will be responsible for the collation of information, which may come from a range of disparate systems, for extract purposes. This could include mapping recorded activity to relevant TFCs and Main Specialty Codes for extraction purposes, if this is not already recorded natively within the system.

5 Technical Guidance

5.1 Information Standards Process

All approved new data standards, and changes to existing standards, are communicated to the providers and system suppliers through the publication of an ISN. These notices are published and available to view on the [DCB webpage](#).

The key aim of the Information Standard is to provide clear and unambiguous instruction to all stakeholders on the action required of them relating to the information standard and the associated timescales. The standard will provide the stakeholders with sufficient detail to enable them to plan for and implement the information standard. More information on the stages of information standard development is available on [the NHS Digital website](#).

The standard also imposes a legal requirement on care providers to pay regard to the standard. The service provider must ensure that they have a system or systems to deliver the requirements specified in the standard. The contractual agreement between data providers and system suppliers will dictate whether system suppliers act in accordance with the standard and at what cost.

Technical guidance in support of the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard can be found in a number of supporting documents described at the beginning of this document, section 2.4 'Related Documents'.

5.2 Conformance Criteria

The responsibilities of both users and suppliers are set out in the form of measurable tests to indicate that the information standard is being used correctly by a provider organisation (conformance criteria). Please see the *Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard Requirements Specification* document.

5.3 Systems

Local systems should be configured in a way that allows local data capture requirements to be met, but also allow the TFC and Main Specialty Code information to be mapped (if required), recorded and (in future) extracted.

5.4 Data Flow and 'Dual Running' of Code Lists

This Fundamental Standard does not mandate the flow of data, which will instead be controlled by specific standards which incorporate the TFC and Main Specialty Code data items.

This Standard specifies that data sets and collections using Treatment Functions and Main Specialties, such as CDS, should be updated in line with the conformance date for this standard (April 2021). However, there may be a requirement for the previous lists of TFCs and Main Specialty Codes to be supported alongside the updated lists introduced by this standard. This may occur if, for example, this standard goes live in April 2021 but a new version of a data set which uses the TFC and Main Specialty Code data items does not go live until a later date. In this instance, providers will need to ensure that their system can be mapped to record the updated codes for local use and also map (and extract) the previous codes for existing data sets (i.e. previous versions of data sets that are yet to be updated with the new codes).

6 Maintenance

6.1 Implementation Strategy

NHS Digital have agreed an implementation strategy with the TFMG. The intention is that this update to the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard will be followed by further updates to align with the Clinical Coding Classifications release cycle. This is usually every three years and is also designed to tie in with National Tariff Payments System requirements.

This regular update strategy will aid local planning and development by providing a consistent fixed implementation window in order to make implementation deadlines more achievable.

Further information is available in the *Treatment Function Maintenance Group Treatment Function Acceptance Criteria* document.

6.2 Maintenance of the Code Lists

The Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard will be formally maintained by NHS Digital in accordance with NHS Digital's maintenance procedures to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose'.

The content of the Treatment Function and Main Specialty lists is determined from consultation with various stakeholder groups, largely via the TFMG who also consider and approve all changes (prior to formal approval of the standard by DCB). The TFMG includes both clinical and non-clinical members from various national bodies and provider organisations. Further information on the group's membership is available from the *Treatment Function Maintenance Group Terms of Reference* document.

The scope of the maintenance process covers:

- Management of change requests from users and stakeholders
- Management of changes in response to updated practice, policy and legislation. Specifically, changes to the Main Specialty Code list are principally governed by the ['Health Care and Associated Professions' statutory instruments](#)
- The process for authorisation and approval of changes to the items, including obtaining DCB standard change acceptance
- Undertaking periodic reviews of the items, including the values included and the associated descriptions
- Amendments to the guidance documentation for clarity or to amend errors.

6.3 Future Requirements

Requests for new Treatment Functions, or amendments to existing Treatment Functions, should be made by emailing enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk including 'Request for new TFC' in the subject line.

A web portal is in the process of being developed to allow web-based submissions of such requests in the future, as well as to provide more information about the standard and its implementation.

Each request should be supported by a valid business requirement i.e. what change is needed, justification (i.e. why is it needed) and also any associated policy or professional body endorsement.

Any requirement requests will be considered by the TFMG prior to submission to the DCB for formal assurance and the publication of an updated Information Standard. These requests could come from individual services or developers of other standards. The Information Standard will inform the NHS and systems suppliers of the changes and timescales.

Changes to the scope of TFCs (e.g. the addition of community services) are likely to require the publication of an updated ISN.

6.4 Data Coordination Board (DCB)

Further acceptance of an Information Standard change submission by DCB will be required prior to publication and implementation of any change to the Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard.

7 Implementation Support

7.1 Support

Requests for new Treatment Functions, or amendments to existing Treatment Functions, should be made by emailing enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk including 'Request for new TFC' in the subject line. Any queries about this standard can also be raised using this method.

7.2 Additional Sources of Information

NHS Data Model and Dictionary

Full details of changes to data items, including definitions and associated value lists are available on the NHS Data Model and Dictionary website:

www.datadictionary.nhs.uk

Terminology and Classifications

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

Data Coordination Board (DCB)

DCB oversees the development, assurance and approval of information standards, data collections, and data extractions.

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/information-standards/information-standards-and-data-collections-including-extractions>

7.3 Disclaimer

This document is intended to provide guidance for users in relation to the capture of Treatment Function and Main Specialty information.

If you are concerned that any aspect of this guidance does not accurately reflect the intended purpose and/or official policy, legislative or best practice guidance; please send details to NHS Digital at enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk (including 'Treatment Function and Main Specialty Standard' within the subject line).