

**FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
COMMISSIONING & SYSTEM MANAGEMENT**

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To: CEOs of SHAs, NHS trusts and Foundation trusts

Gateway Reference: 12963

19 November 2009

Dear Colleague,

Timely access to quality health services for patients should be something that we can all expect, whether we access those services in a hospital or in a community setting. In 2008, we published 'Framing the Contribution of Allied Health Professionals' setting out a commitment to mandate the collection of data on referral to treatment times (RTT) for services provided by Allied Health Professionals (AHPs). This letter explains how we are working with the NHS to support the delivery of this commitment and our expectations as we move forward. I attach further detail at Annex A, for information.

We have begun work with 11 pilot sites to identify existing RTT data reporting processes, some of which link with the existing '18 Weeks' GP referral to start of consultant-led treatment pathways. The pilot sites are helping us understand how the existing definitions and related data collection are being utilised to measure RTT and will assist in the testing of new definitions in the service. In addition to the pilot sites, AHP professional networks are represented on an Expert Reference Panel for the project to help maximise the benefits of the pilot site process.

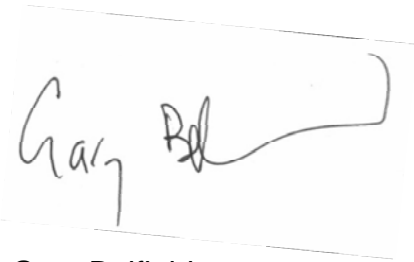
By April 2010, we will publish early notification to the NHS of the draft AHP RTT data definitions. In Summer 2010, we will seek approval for the definitions from the Information Standard Board (ISB) and the review of Central Returns (ROCR). We intend to finalise the technical guidance, for mandatory collection from April 2011, subject to ISB and ROCR approval. Please note that although the data collection will not be mandatory before April 2011, NHS organisations are encouraged to collect the data on a voluntary basis from Spring 2010 as good practice, in preparation for robust implementation.

Improved community information has the potential to underpin better decision making for commissioners and improved quality of service for patients. Your

organisation may have already begun work to plan implementation of this data collection, and I would encourage you to keep up the momentum on progress locally.

If you would like to keep up to date with developments in the pilot sites, or you require further information this work, please email your request to: transformingcommunityservices@dh.gsi.gov.uk or contact the TCS lead in your Strategic Health Authority.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Belfield", enclosed within a rectangular box. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Gary Belfield
Acting Director General
Commissioning & System Management

Annex A

Timeframe for Mandating AHP Data Collection

April 2010	DH publish early notification to the NHS of the draft AHP RTT data definitions, via the Information Centre.
Spring 2010	<i>Voluntary implementation in the NHS</i>
Summer 2010	DH seek approval for the definitions from the Information Standard Board (ISB)
Summer 2010	DH finalise technical guidance
April 2011	<i>Mandatory implementation in the NHS</i>

AHP Service Improvement

Alongside mandating AHP RTT data collection, the Secretary of State has announced work to support AHP service improvement. DH is working in co-production with SHAs to identify AHP services to participate in the project with a focus on improving access to AHP services. Each AHP service will be provided with support (tools for service redesign) to improve access to their services with the aim of sustainable service improvement. The project will develop a toolkit to facilitate AHP service innovation to improve access, patient experience and outcomes. The Service Improvement project will be linking into the AHP RTT project to learn from service quality issues raised through the pilot sites on data collection.