Minimum Systems Specification (MSS)

Requirements for GMS clinical systems

Final v1.0

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1. Introduction

This document details the system requirements which GP systems must meet under the National Framework Agreement for GP Systems. This is a set of mandatory requirements for GP clinical systems, known as the Minimum System Specification (MSS) and has been developed to ensure that the IM&T needs of GP practices are delivered equally across Wales.

The Primary Care IM&T Programme (PCIP), on behalf of GP practices and LHBs, will be responsible for ensuring that systems meet these requirements through the management and operation of the MSS Compliance Scheme. They will work closely with the Welsh Primary Care representatives, LHBs, Informing Healthcare and others to ensure that the requirements are maintained and that the management of the compliance scheme is effective in introducing changes to GP systems under the National GMS Systems and Services Framework Agreement.

The MSS Design and Compliance Steering Group (MDACS) is the operational face of the MSS Compliance Scheme and will be responsible for the development and maintenance of MSS and the provision and management of assurance activities to ensure systems meet the requirements on an ongoing basis.

1.1. Purpose

The Minimum Systems Specification aims to provide:

- common standards to support national systems interconnectivity
- availability of a core set of functionality to all GP Practices
- a means to ensure systems are “fit for purpose”.

The adoption of MSS compliant GP systems across Wales will:

- ensure equity of functionality across Wales, by setting out minimum standards;
- provide a vehicle for specifying systems development required to meet the GMS contract requirements and national strategic led by Informing Healthcare;
- ensure increased functionality security and reliability of GP systems;
- provide a level of functional commonality and interoperability with the national architecture, its systems and services (such as the Individual Health Record);

1.2. Scope

The MSS details a subset of the service requirements that GP system suppliers are contracted to provide under the National Framework Agreement. This subset of services is predominantly concerned with functional requirements typically met by an IT system or solution. There are a small number of requirements within MSS that straddle the boundary between services provided by technology and those provided by human resources. Supplier services not provided wholly by IT systems (i.e. the ‘GP system’) are not included within MSS.

The first version of MSS is based on the, now disbanded, RFA scheme with the additional requirement for GP systems in Wales to connect to DAWN2.

Subsequent versions of MSS will be based on core elements of the ‘GP Systems’ module of the NHS Connecting for Health (CFH) compliance scheme developed as a replacement for RFA. These versions will refer to those elements of the NHS CFH scheme applicable to Wales with Welsh specific variations added or de-scoped as required.

The list below outlines the high level functional scope of MSS:
Functional/System Requirements

- Information governance – system security, access rights, audit trails, etc
- Patient record functions - demographics including interfaces to national demographic systems (WDS); patient clinical records and various functionality to create, maintain and view the data; add attachments,
- Patient scheduling (appointments)
- Care management – referral & discharge, prescribing, call/recall, problem management, test requests and results, etc – many of which will involve electronic exchange of information with other organisations and systems
- Analysis and reporting functions internal and external, e.g. QOF returns
- Interfaces to external systems (e.g. Registration Links, Pathology results, links to the future Individual Health Record) to facilitate shared care and shared information

Note that MSS contains a minimum set of functional requirements and standards to ensure interoperability with other systems and good safety and security measures. It is not intended to be or become a full specification for GP clinical systems.

1.3. Future Versions of MSS

The requirements of GP Practices in Wales will change over time as business processes and technology changes. There are a number of IT related initiatives within Wales that in due course will require changes to GP systems to deliver these changes to GP practices. These include sharing information with other parts of the Welsh NHS (e.g. Out of Hours service, A&E services); the electronic transfer of clinical correspondence, and many others.

MSS is the vehicle for publishing any new requirements. This document contains the requirements of a specific version of MSS (see cover). Any changes to the requirements within MSS will result in a new version of this document. The timescales by which GP systems are expected to become compliant with a new version of MSS are NOT contained in this document – this is handled by other mechanisms within the National GMS Systems and Services Framework Agreement, and will be published on the Welsh MSS website.
2. MSS Structure

MSS covers two types of requirement - functional, or system requirements, and non-functional or service requirements. To gain MSS Compliance a supplier must meet the functional requirements.

The functional requirements must be met by a single IT solution set, i.e. it is not possible to have some functional requirements met by product A and some by product B if A and B cannot be supplied as a single coherent solution set. Where a supplier can provide alternative solutions, each solution will be tested against the functional requirements. The supplier’s services will be tested once against the service requirements, i.e. functional and service requirements can be tested independently.

2.1. Functional Requirements ‘Modules’

The MSS requirements comprise a collection of requirement modules with each module covering a logical domain (e.g. a business domain, a clinical messaging domain). There will be a set of mandatory modules and a set of optional modules with optional modules likely to become mandatory modules in future versions. Testing against modules can be undertaken independently except where modules interact. This modular structure provides greater flexibility for suppliers in terms of development and testing and enables NHS Wales to spread the load of change should it consider it necessary.

The requirements for GP systems in Wales is not dissimilar to those of England and the other home countries. MSS will, where appropriate, utilise modules developed and published by NHS England or other home countries and will also develop its own modules in order to specify its requirements. Where necessary, variations in the requirements within a module from outside Wales will be specified as a supplement to the module. This approach will also extend to the testing of systems under the MSS Compliance Scheme, i.e. a system that passes testing against a set of requirements published by NHS England will be seen as compliant under the Welsh scheme (subject to satisfactory statements to that affect being received from the other country).

The following diagram illustrates the structure for a future version of MSS. It shows a number of NHS Connecting for Health (England) modules expected to be a part of MSS and a number of Welsh specific modules expected to arise from initiatives within the Informing Healthcare Programme. (Note: The diagram does NOT indicate the actual requirements modules within the current version of MSS.)
3. The Requirements

The requirements for MSS v1.0 require suppliers to provide a system and services (where included) with the following credentials:

- The system has achieved RFA99 v1.1 accreditation RFA99 (includes service requirements – support, training, etc.)
- The system has achieved accreditation against QOF/QMAS v9
- The system has demonstrated successful operation of GP/HA Reg Links, GP/HA IOS Links and Pathology Messaging through a GP practice’s connection to DAWN2

The full set of detailed requirements and supporting technical documentation for all of the above requirements, except the DAWN2 requirements, can be obtained from:

Existing Systems Programme
NHS Connecting for Health
1 Whitehall
Leeds
LS1

The DAWN2 interface requirements can be obtained from the MSS Project Office (see contact details).

The following sections on Testing Arrangements and Compliance Status detail how suppliers achieve MSS compliance for this version.
4. Testing Arrangements

4.1. Gaining Compliance to MSS Version 1.0

Suppliers who wish to attain compliance to MSS version 1.0 must provide appropriate official documentation (e.g. certificate, declaration of successful system test) issued by NHS IA or NHS Connecting for Health for RFA 99 v1.1 and for QOF/QMAS v9.

Suppliers who already have systems meeting these requirements operating successfully in Wales over DAWN2 must submit a statement to that affect together with a schedule of practices operating in this way together with their approximate DAWN2 operational commencement date. Documentation is to be sent to MSS Project Office (see contact details).

4.1.1. RFA 99 v1.1 Testing Arrangements

Testing of systems against the RFA 99 v1.1 requirements is no longer possible as the RFA scheme closed in 2004. Suppliers wishing to provide a system under the National GP Systems and Services Framework Agreement without such accreditation should contact the MSS Project Office (see contact details).

4.1.2. QOF/QMAS Testing Arrangements

QOF/QMAS requirements are updated approximately twice per year. NHS Connecting for Health continue to test GP systems against these requirements and award ‘QOF vX Accreditation’ status to systems that meet the requirement. Testing is carried out in 1-3 month test windows just prior the ‘go live’ date for each version and is available to any supplier of GP systems to English GP practices.

4.1.3. DAWN2 Testing Arrangements

Please contact the MSS Project Office (see contact details) for details.
5. Compliance Status

Suppliers and Systems meeting the requirements of MSS v1.0 and having provided appropriate documentation, will be awarded compliance against MSS v1.0. Details of each supplier and system with MSS compliance will be published on a future MSS website.

Suppliers are required to ensure that such systems and services continue to meet these requirements whilst supplied under the National Framework Agreement and until such time as the system and services are upgraded to a later version of MSS.

6. Contact Details

MSS Project Office
Primary Care IM&T Programme
Information Services Division
Health and Social Care Department
Welsh Assembly Government
8th floor, Oldway Centre
36 Orchard Street
Swansea, SA1 5AQ