

4 February 2021

## Data Security and Protection Toolkit and NHSmail: update for adult social care sector

This note is to pre-brief key stakeholders about forthcoming changes to social care aspects of the Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT) in March, plus the extension of fast-track access to NHSmail for social care providers to 30 June 2021.

This briefing is to help you to prepare for the changes, including scheduling any updates to websites or materials where you reference the DSPT and NHSmail for care providers.

### Background

Adult social care providers should use the DSPT to assess how they are keeping people's information safe and protecting themselves from the risk of a data breach or cyber attack. Care providers need to complete the DSPT self-assessment and publish the standard that they achieve in order to, for example, have access to shared care records. NHSX are announcing two changes in relation to the DSPT for adult social care providers.

### Fast track access to NHSmail – extended to 30 June 2021

During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, secure communication between health and social care services is more important than ever. To support this, care providers are able to access **NHSmail** without the need to complete the DSPT. The original deadline for this waiver was 31 March 2021.

Following a review by NHSX, **the waiver has now been extended to 30 June 2021**, in line with the deadline for 2020/21 DSPT social care self-assessments.

NHSmail is a [secure email service](#) which care provider can use to communicate securely with health and social care colleagues.

[Digital Social Care](#) provides videos, guides and FAQs on how to access and use NHSmail.

Care providers can also contact the National Administration Service on [careadmin@nhs.net](mailto:careadmin@nhs.net) or by calling 0333 200 1133. This is a 24 hour, 7 day per week service.

**ACTION:** Please update any reference to fast track to NHSmail to 30 June 2021. You can do this immediately. Please continue to encourage care providers to register with and use the DSPT as the most effective way of assessing and demonstrating how they are keeping data safe.

## New DSPT status for care providers: Approaching Standards

There are different levels of compliance with the DSPT one of which Entry Level is mainly used by social care providers. This level was introduced on a temporary basis because information governance, cyber security and the DSPT are new to the majority of the sector. Entry Level demonstrates compliance with basic legal requirements. This level will come to an end in March 2021.

A new **Approaching Standards status is due to be introduced on 5 March 2021.**

Approaching Standards will only be available to social care providers. (This will be similar to the Standards Not Fully Met (Plan Agreed) which is available to NHS organisations.)

Providers who are completing the DSPT at local level using the location's V code will see the Approaching Standards view from 5 March 2021.

Providers who are completing the DSPT with a head office code beginning A or C will see the Approaching Standards view from 19 March 2021.

Approaching Standards is not a direct replacement of Entry Level. It is a new status available to care providers who have demonstrated good progress but have not yet reached Standards Met. It covers 27 of the 44 questions required to reach Standards Met, and goes beyond the original Entry Level requirements (11 questions). The individual questions themselves are not being changed.

For those care providers who are at Approaching Standards, an **improvement plan** will be required to show how they intend to reach Standards Met and there will be help available to produce this plan. The DSPT will automatically generate a basic improvement plan identifying the questions and areas that need to be developed in order to progress to Standards Met. Care providers then have to identify the actions they will take in order to progress.

**Approaching Standards will be used for *all* self-assessments relating to 2020/21, which need to be completed by 30 June 2021.** If care providers have already started their self-assessment for 2020/21 prior to the introduction of this new status, the information they have entered will be retained. They do not have to start the process again. They may, however, need to complete an improvement plan.

If a care provider has already published a self-assessment for 2020/21 at Entry Level they will be required to reassess their status and complete an improvement plan.

If a care provider has already published a self-assessment for 2020/21 at Standards Met they will NOT be required to reassess their status in 2020/21.

There will be no gap between the Entry Level being withdrawn and Approaching Standards being available. Approaching Standards will also be the minimum status required for new users of NHSmail, when the NHSmail waiver comes to an end from 30 June 2021.

Approaching Standards is a step up from Entry Level. It will help providers to consider issues which are increasingly important, such as the security of information shared via personal or work mobiles.

The Better Security, Better Care support programme will be available to help care providers to understand and reach Approaching Standards and above. This will include: new guidance from Digital Social Care; films; webinars; FAQs; a comprehensive local support programme with a strong focus on small and medium sized organisations; and a national support programme for larger care groups. This support programme will also be launched in March.

In the meantime, the DSPT team will be contacting all care providers registered on the DSPT to pre-brief them about this development.

If care providers have queries about Approaching Standards, they can contact the Digital Social Care Team at [hello@digitalsocialcare.co.uk](mailto:hello@digitalsocialcare.co.uk).

To keep up to date with information about digital and data security, including the DSPT, register for the free [Digital Social Care e-newsletter](#).

**ACTION:** Please review any content that you currently have about Entry Level status for care providers and draft changes to this. If you receive enquiries please advise care providers that Approaching Standards will be used for *all* self-assessments relating to 2020/21, which need to be completed by 30 June 2021, and that a support programme will be available shortly.

We will contact you again in early March with links to updated guidance on Approaching Standards.