

THE NHS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FRAMEWORK GROUP

BRIEFING ON THE E-KSF AND DATA SECURITY

The e-ksf is the service developed specifically to run the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework electronically. It is provided under contract by Think Associates Ltd and Ikonami Ltd. The Department of Health holds the contract on behalf of the four UK countries, and manages this in conjunction with NHS Employers. Development of the e-ksf within its agreed remit is shaped by policy and the needs of users, and is determined through a subgroup of the UK-wide KSF Group.

All aspects of the e-ksf service are routinely tested by Ikonami before release and data security is of the highest priority. There have been no reported adverse incidents in relation to information security since the e-ksf was commissioned.

In addition to the service provider's internal security testing it is recognised best practice to carry out independent security testing on a regular basis. This independent testing has now been completed, for the first time and will be repeated in future as necessary.

Independent security testing was arranged with advice and support from the DH Information Security Policy Manager. QinetiQ, a government approved security company, were engaged to conduct a formal IT Security Health Check on the e-ksf.

QinetiQ produced an initial report identifying potential areas for security improvement and made recommendations as to how these could be addressed. The e-ksf team ensured the necessary changes were made and QinetiQ conducted a second test.

Following this re-test QinetiQ confirmed that all the areas addressed had been satisfactorily dealt with. There remain a few areas where additional improvements have been suggested, but these need further consideration by the KSF subgroup as there is potential for excluding some user groups if they are implemented (for instance they would include a requirement for all staff to have access to an NHS email account, which is not presently the case).

The results of the second QinetiQ report were discussed between KSFG representatives from NHS Employers and DH, the DH Information Security Policy Manager, an NHS data security expert and Ikonami. It was agreed that the test itself and the improvements made by Ikonami had been comprehensive and carried out satisfactorily. All parties are also in agreement that the e-ksf tool meets the security requirements for an application of this type.

The full security test report, including additional notes is held by the DH Information Security Policy Manager. It is by its nature a commercially confidential document and cannot be made available. However if further information about the penetration testing is required please contact Gill Rose (gill.rose@nhsemployers.org) in the first instance.