

GPC Update – NHS Appraisal Toolkit

Dear LMC secretary / office

Following Laurence's update below, this is to update you on the situation regarding the shutting down of the NHS appraisal toolkit. We are happy for you to pass this on to GPs in your area (in fact we would encourage this).

Following the telephone conversation between Laurence and Mike O' Brien, we have now written formally to the Department to ask them to write to all PCTs, advising them to be flexible in their use of appraisal deadlines for any GPs affected by the problem. We have also asked for any costs incurred by appraisers and appraisees to be met, as well as re-affirming the importance of the security of information uploaded on to the toolkit. We have not asked them to revise the three week shut down period, due to the importance of the security problem being resolved properly.

In case you missed it, the Department of Health released the attached statement regarding this situation. There is advice for GPs from the people who run the toolkit at its website at <http://www.appraisals.nhs.uk>, and in the attached document.

Other than that, the situation outlined in Laurence's e-mail below remains. We will provide further updates as and when we get them.

Best Wishes

Joe

Joe Read
Senior Policy Executive
General Practitioners Committee

Dear All

I was phoned about this at lunchtime today by the minister, Mike O'Brien.

The government today announced that they have identified a security problem with the NHS appraisal toolkit. As a result of this, the toolkit is to be shut down for three weeks, so that the suppliers can modify it to ensure security. Mike O'Brien, the health minister, was meant to make an announcement so we could alert all GPs but I am not certain he has announced it formally yet. [This PDF has turned up however.](#)

There are two clear aspects to this problem - data security and the appraisal itself. Taking these in turn:

Data Security

We have been unable to ascertain exactly how long the security problem existed for before it was identified yesterday. However, we have no reason to believe that an actual security breach occurred - i.e. that anyone accessed data that they were not authorised to see on any doctor(s) using the toolkit. The government have assured us that steps will be taken to ensure the full security of doctors' data before the toolkit is re-launched. It is expected that this will take about three weeks.

Appraisal

The shutting down of the toolkit will affect the appraisal of any GP who uses the NHS appraisal toolkit, and whose appraisal is due to take place during the three week period (and possibly after). GPs who are unable to participate in their arranged appraisal due the toolkit being shut down should organise an alternative date for their appraisal. PCOs are being told about this tonight and are being told to be reasonable. I know...

This situation may lead to some GPs being unable to meet the normal deadline for the completion of their appraisal. We have urged the government to advise PCOs not to put unfair pressure on GPs who have not completed their appraisal before the deadline, through no fault of their own.

Additionally, we have stated to the government that any extra costs to appraisers and appraisees caused by this problem should be met in full.

We will provide further details on this issue as soon as we have them.

Laurence

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