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Problem Management Obligations

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# Introduction

This document provides direction to the Supplier regarding Problem Management. The requirements and obligations set out in this document apply to both Type 1 and Type2 Catalogue Solutions.

This document forms part of the Service Management Standard.

## Problem Management

The Supplier is responsible for the management and resolution of all Problems and shall implement and follow an ITIL aligned Problem management process.

The Purpose of problem management is to reduce the likelihood and impact of incidents by identifying the cause of incidents, managing workarounds, and known errors.

Unless defined below, capitalised terms in this document shall have the meanings ascribed to them in Schedule 1 (Definitions).

**"Problem"** means in respect of one or more existing or potential Incidents either: (a) the unknown Root Cause or (b) a known Root Cause that has yet to be resolved.

**"Problem Record"** means a record of the details and history of a Problem raised by the Supplier on the Service Management Toolset in accordance with the Supplier’s Problem management process.

**"Root Cause"** means the underlying reason for the occurrence of an Incident or Problem (as the case may be).

## Problem Identification

The following describes how problems shall be identified by the supplier:

1. **Incident** - Where an Incident, has been resolved via the use of a workaround and the underlying root cause is not known, a Problem Record will be opened upon resolution of the Incident. **Note: A Problem record must not be opened if the Incident has not been resolved. In the absence of a workaround the incident must remain open.**
2. **HSSI –** Following an HSSI, the supplier shall raise a problem record to ascertain the root cause and deploy a successful fix within 60 working days.
3. **Proactive** – The supplier shall trend on performance monitoring data to capture re-occurring incidents.
4. **Release** – Defect identified because of a Release being deployed to the first Service Recipient.
5. **Other** – At the request of NHS England and other stakeholders if they become aware of a problem.

## Problem Logging

The Supplier shall use a suitable Service Management Toolset that provides the means to record, track and monitor Problems from the moment that a Problem Record is logged on the Service Management Toolset through to the resolution of the Problem and completion of any subsequent remedial activities.

The Service Management Toolset must allow the following as minimum:

1. Allocate each problem record with a unique reference number when the problem is logged
2. Date and time logged
3. SLA due date
4. Problem priority
5. Problem summary / description
6. Affected services
7. Root cause
8. Resolution details
9. Related incidents / changes
10. Retain all data within the Service Management toolset for a minimum of 24 months and be capable of containing for each Problem:

The following matrix details the urgency and impact the supplier follow when assigning a priority to a problem record.

When determining the number of Service Recipients and/or End Users that are potentially impacted, the Supplier may, acting in good faith, calculate the number based on the information readily available to them and their experience of similar Problems based always on the Evidence.

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| **Problem Priority** | | **Urgency** | | |
| **High**  The problem has serious and unsustainable effects on the service and/or its users. | **Medium**  The problem has a significant effect on the service and/or its users, and timescales to complete the task take significantly longer than expected due to the workaround in place. | **Low**  The problem has minimal effect on the service and/or its users. A simple workaround can be followed by end users to complete the task |
| **Impact** | **High**  Known to be impacting >65% of Service Recipients. | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| **Medium**  Known to be impacting >20% & <=65% of Service Recipients. | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| **Low**  Known to be impacting <=20% of Service Recipients | **3** | **4** | **5** |

## Problem Workaround

A workaround is defined as a solution that reduces or eliminates the impact or probability of an incident for which a full resolution is not yet known or available.

Where a workaround has been identified for a problem, this must then be tested and accepted by the end user as a valid workaround.

Any new incidents raised which are resolved by means of a workaround from a known problem must be linked and reviewed adequately to ensure the correct priority is assigned.

A problem record must not be open on back of an incident if there is no valid workaround available, the incident must remain open until resolution.

## Problem Deferrals & Known Errors

This section details the guidelines the suppliers must follow to defer a Problem. Each problem must be assessed on its own individual merit for deferral.

1. A problem record with a priority of 1, 2 and 3 will not be deferred and the root cause of the issue will be addressed.
2. A problem record must not be deferred to avoid breach of SLA.
3. In the event where a problem is caused by a third party, the supplier must make reasonable attempts to engage with the third party at least once a week for progress updates.
4. All deferred problems must have detailed justification in the supplier ITSM toolset and included in the monthly PMR. These problem records will be reviewed in the service review.
5. A decision may be made by the supplier to defer the problem resolution based on no adequate business justification to progress to a permanent resolution with a viable workaround being available. In this instance, the end user will be informed, and known error record open, and the problem record closed. The problem record cannot be deferred before 90 working days.
6. If at any time the above deferral conditions are not followed by a Supplier, the Service Management Agent (acting reasonably) reserves the right to review, audit and cancel active deferrals. Any Problems that are deferred inappropriately will be set to a failure service level (if they would have reached that level without the benefit of the deferral).

## Problem Resolution & Closure

Once the root cause has been identified and fix has been developed, the problem will be resolved as per the following:

1. A software or a hardware change has been implemented successfully to the first Service Recipient which prevents the problem from reoccurring.
2. Where a permanent fix is not viable, but a workaround has been put in place to mitigate the impact and there has been no occurrence of incidents in last 90 working days.
3. Following confirmation, the problem has been resolved, the problem record can be closed. A check should be performed at this time to ensure that the record contains a full historical description of all events, and if not, the record should be updated. The status of any related Known Error Record should be updated to shown that the resolution has been applied.