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**Internet First Policy**

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Glossary of Terms

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| --- | --- |
| Term / Abbreviation | What it stands for |
| CCS | Crown Commercial Service |
| GDS | Government Digital Service  |
| HSCN | Health and Social Care Network |
| N3 | New National Network  |
| NCSC | National Cyber Security Centre  |
| NIB | National Information Board |
| CCS | Crown Commercial Service |

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# Introduction

In approving the full business case for the Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) Programme the Cabinet Office Major Projects Review Group (chaired by the Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary John Manzoni) recommended ministers approve the business case subject to NHS Digital:

* developing plans to present the national systems, services and applications, relied upon by the Health and Social Care system, wholly over public networks (i.e. the Internet) and
* removing any reliance on and decommissioning the national private wide area network (i.e. HSCN) .

This strategic direction was subsequently supported in 2017 by a Government Digital Service (GDS) announcement that the Internet was ‘OK’ for the vast majority of digital public sector services. GDS’s rationale was that a private network does not change the need for basic application-level security which in most cases is deployed anyway raising the question whether the extra layer of network complexity adds any value.

Consequently UK Government strategy being set by GDS, the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) is to seek the widest possible range of network suppliers and to develop a set of standards to ensure high quality connections to Internet facing services.

This vision of ubiquitous access to online public-sector services is reflected in the Government’s blueprint for transforming health and care services, the National Information Board’s (NIB) Personalised Health and Care 2020: A Framework for Action paper. The framework, which is subsequently adopted in The Health and Social Care Information Centre Strategy 2015-2020, seeks to support the requirements of health and social care professionals to work flexibly from a variety of locations using a range of access methods.

Consequently there are three key drivers to move systems, services and applications in the Health and Social Care System from private to public networking;

1. The health and social care system requirement for ubiquitous access to systems, services and applications for health and social care professionals
2. The HSCN business case condition; to sunset and transition to the Internet
3. Government strategy for digital public sector services

This Internet First Policy supports the strategy and governance to move existing systems, services and applications off the HSCN and direct new ones to use the Internet first.

# Policy Context

## Objectives

* To support ubiquitous staff and citizen access to the health and social care systems, services and applications across public networks.
* To support central government policy to rundown the use of private networks (i.e. the Transition Network and HSCN) by replacing them with consumer grade public networks (i.e. the Internet).
* To signal the retirement of the nationally provided private wide-area network (HSCN).

## Audience

This policy has relevance to all consumers of the health and care systems, services and applications and/or the Transition Network or HSCN. Broadly these can be categorised as:

**NHS Digital** – For anyone involved in the governance, commissioning, design, development or delivery of IT systems, services and applications for Direct Care, Secondary Uses or Internal this policy establishes a mandatory requirement that must be tracable in each IT system, service or application solution.

**Health and Social Care Organisations** – For anyone involved in the governance, commissioning, design, development or delivery of IT systems, services and applications this policy is offered for information and guidance.

**Third Party** **Application Providers** – For anyone involved in the governance, commissioning, design, development or delivery of Third Party IT systems, services and applications this policy is offered for information and guidance.

## Internet First definition

By Internet First, we mean:

* new NHS Digital IT systems, services and applications must be accessible over publicly addressable Internet by default rather than the Transition Network or HSCN.
* existing IT systems, services and applications exclusive to the Transition Network or HSCN must transition to be accessible over publicly addressable Internet.

## Scope

The scope of this policy applies to all NHS Digital IT systems, services and applications whose requirements are to present or expose services end users or integrating systems over a wide-area network. This includes but is not limited to IT systems, services and applications that provide user or application interfaces for authentication, file and batch upload or messaging.

Whilst this policy has no mandate outside of NHS Digital it is expected to be of interest to the Audience identified above as this policy has implications for all consumers of the existing nationally provided private wide area networks i.e. the Transition Network and HSCN.

## Governance

For NHS Digital IT systems, services and applications this policy will be part of the Enterprise Architecture suite of policies and principles for use in commercial and architectural governance processes.

For Health and Social Care Organisations and third party application providers this policy is provided as guidance to be applied in their governance process e.g. in determining how to be ready for the end of the Transition Network and the potential switch off of the private component of HSCN.

# Policy Statement

The following policy statements set out clear expectations for NHS Digital IT systems, services and applications.

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| Ref | Policy Statement | Guidance Notes |
| P.1 | All new IT systems, services and applications are mandated so that end users and integrating systems access them over the Internet. | **G.1****G.5** |
| P.2 | All existing IT systems, services and applications are mandated to remediate so that end users and integrating systems access them over the Internet. | **G.2****G.5** |
| P.3 | The private component of the national wide area network, HSCN, will be decommissioned at the earliest appropriate point.  | **G.3****G.4****G.5** |

# Guidance notes

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| Ref | Policy Statement |
| G.1 | Where a new IT system, service or application is presented over the Internet exclusively an assessment must be made of recommended way to route to it, including the impact on existing networks (e.g. the Transition Network Enhanced Internet Gateway). This applies until the end of the HSCN migration. |
| G.2 | To remediate Transition Network or HSCN exclusive IT systems, services or applications, a dual-homed transition state is recommended i.e. they should be both publically and privately addressable to reduce migration risks and enable them to be presented over the internet at the earliest possible point. |
| G.3 | The nationally provided private component of the HSCN wide-area network will be decommissioned at the earliest appropriate point and its existance should not be assumed after 31 March 2021.  |
| G.4 | Health and Social Care sites connecting to IT systems, services and applications or the Internet via the Transition Network or HSCN should prepare for the end of the private component of WAN provision. This will impact on how sites access the Internet (Internet egress) and how remote users and applications access applications hosted at the site over the Internet (Internet ingress). |
| G.5 | It is recognised that in some exceptional circumstances the use of a private WAN may be necessary locally but a case must be made to the relevant authority and it must be contracted and funded locally. |