

Patient Safety Domain
Nursing Directorate
NHS England
4-8 Maple Street
London W1T 5HD

31 January 2014

Dear Dr van Besouw,

Re: Launch of National Patient Safety Alerting System

Firstly, I would like to thank you, your colleagues and members for your continued support in driving up patient safety and ensuring it remains a top priority in healthcare across the country.

The year ahead presents some exciting times for patient safety at NHS England and will see the launch of a number of new safety initiatives, as we build upon the momentum of 2013 and continue to implement what was outlined in both the Berwick and Francis reports.

The first of these initiatives is being launched today, with the introduction of the new National Patient Safety Alerting System (NPSAS). This new system builds upon the previous National Patient Safety Agency alerting system, with an improved, more flexible model that allows for the rapid dissemination of urgent information to healthcare providers to identify risks.

The NPSAS uses a three-stage alerting system, allowing us to also provide organisations with a range of tools, advice, guidance and learning resources to eliminate or reduce risks. It also serves as a mechanism for organisations to share successful local learning and resources, so that best practice can be shared between providers from a central point.

The three stages of alert used by the new NPSAS are:

Stage One Alert: Warning

This stage 'warns' organisations of emerging risk. It can be issued very quickly once a new risk has been identified to allow rapid dissemination of information.

Stage Two Alert: Resource

This alert may be issued some weeks or months after the stage one alert, and could consist of:

- sharing of relevant local information identified by providers following a stage one alert;
- sharing of examples of local good practice that mitigates the risk identified in the stage one alert;
- access to tools and resources that help providers implement solutions to the stage one alert; and
- access to learning resources that are relevant to all healthcare workers and can be used as evidence of continued professional development.

Stage Three Alert: Directive

When this stage of alert is issued, organisations will be required to confirm they have implemented specific solutions or actions to mitigate the risk.

Further information about the NPSAS and examples of each stage of alert can be found in the *An introduction to the NHS England Patient Safety Alerting System* document available on the [NHS England website](#).

I would like to say another thank you to your organisation for its continued participation in our Patient Safety Expert Groups (PSEGs). These groups had a key role to play in the development of the new alerting system. Going forward, in general, each alert will be sponsored and supported by the most relevant of our six PSEGs, enabling us to call upon the expertise of the group's members to provide advice on when patient safety issues should be addressed with an alert, and on actions required to make patient care safer. Your PSEG representative was integral to the development of this system and should be able to talk to you and your colleagues about it further, but my team would be happy to help should they need any support.

I would be extremely grateful if you can also support us in educating your members about our new alerting system through articles on any of your own websites, or in your magazines, journals and newsletters.

If you would like us to provide any content for articles or would like to make a request for a speaker, please either contact James Nicholls, NHS England patient safety communications manager, james.nicholls4@nhs.net, or get in touch via your PSEG representatives.

This is just one of the major patient safety initiatives we will be launching this year, and I look forward to writing again in the near future with further updates on our progress.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mike Durkin
National Director of Patient Safety