

NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency recommend EAN.UCC standards

London, 12 October 2004. The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) has today recommended that all products supplied to the NHS should be identified using a bar code compliant with EAN.UCC standards. The uptake of standardised bar coding across the NHS supply chain will allow stakeholders to track and trace products and accurately identify and administer them - ultimately improving patient safety. The adoption of data standards will also bring benefits to the NHS outside the supply chain. Having a standard identification system will allow information within the NHS, such as a patient's medical history, to be fully transferable, improving efficiency and providing a support mechanism at the bedside.

The recommendation of the EAN.UCC System from NHS PASA, the agency that manages 3,000 NHS national purchasing contracts, follows a rigorous evaluation and comparison of several global coding standards. "Over the course of the last year PASA has measured eight coding and data carrier standards against a set criteria from The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, in order to be in a position to make a recommendation for uptake across the NHS," says Duncan Eaton, Chief Executive, NHS PASA. "We were delighted to find in EAN.UCC a standard that fully satisfied our key selection criteria."

The decision to recommend a global coding standard to be adopted, controlled and maintained across the NHS is welcomed by e.centre, the not-for-profit UK business association that specialises in open, global supply chain standards and promotes the use of EAN.UCC System in the UK.

"We have been working with NHS PASA to create the 'roadmap' for the adoption of standard item identifiers, bar coding symbology and electronic business communication for all products in the NHS supply chain since February 2003", says Alaster Purchase, Healthcare Project Manager, e.centre. "Looking ahead, e.centre is also well placed to protect the supply chain of the future through its development of standards for the emerging technology, radio frequency identification (RFID). With the adoption of a single EAN.UCC standard we hope that bar coding and, in the future, RFID, can be used as effectively in healthcare as it is in the retail sector."

The recommended adoption of the EAN.UCC standard by PASA will apply to all suppliers in the total NHS supply chain for all products supplied to the NHS independent of supply chain entry level, across the 400 NHS trusts and health authorities under PASA's guidance.

For a full copy of NHS PaSA's recommendations, visit:

http://www.pasa.nhs.uk/ecommerce/bar_coding/Barcoding_position_statement_5oct2004.doc

Notes to editors:

About ecentre

ecentre is the UK authority on cross sector supply chain standards. Part of the worldwide EAN network we deliver supply chain standards and services from for bar coding, electronic business messaging, data synchronisation and radio frequency technology using the EAN.UCC System.

We are a not-for-profit business association with over 17,000 UK members. ecentre's global standards achieve efficiencies and improved business benefits for companies and the supply chain as a whole. ecentre aims to make standards and the adoption of related technology accessible and affordable for the largest to the smallest UK companies.

The worldwide EAN International network now boasts over one million member organisations, operating in 133 countries and support in excess of five billion transactions per day.

www.e-centre.org.uk

About NHS PASA

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) was established in April 2000 to act as a centre of expertise, knowledge and excellence in purchasing and supply matters for the health service, as well as advising on policy and the strategic direction of procurement across the NHS.

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Dear Colleague

eCatalogue standards for non-pharmaceutical products

I would like to bring this important information to your attention.

As you know a key strand of the Agency's role is the development and promotion of a range of standards for use within eProcurement systems in the English NHS.

Catalogues and their product content are an integral element of efficient procurement practices. They link the results of sourcing activities with the requisitioning and purchasing transactions. At NHS trust level accurate eCatalogues are of significant importance in the following areas:

- demand management – hand held data capture devices, eRequisitioning and inventory control systems
- eTrading – electronic transfer of error-free purchase orders directly into suppliers' order entry systems
- eInvoicing – electronic invoices processed by purchase order and accounts payable systems
- tracking and tracing – automatic identification by means of bar codes in goods receipt, stock rooms and operating theatres, linking products to patient data.

None of these can be achieved without high quality eCatalogue data.

To maximise the effectiveness of electronic catalogues it is important that their content is consistent and of good quality, enabling users to easily identify the product they want and ensuring accuracy of purchasing transactions. Accurate and up to date catalogues are essential components to support 'error free trading' in the NHS.

Following widespread consultation with a variety of stakeholders, both within the NHS and supplier community, we have developed a set of data standards for core data held in electronic catalogues and we would strongly recommend that you use these data standards in the implementation of electronic catalogues within your organisation.

The Agency has also developed a set of six documents to support NHS organisations in progressing the development of electronic catalogues. This will support the NHS to establish catalogue management services – either as an in-house or outsourced service.

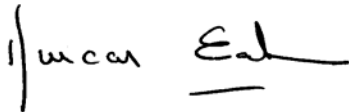
Throughout these guidance documents the Agency's own electronic catalogue, NHS-eCat, has been used as the model to illustrate the relevant issues within a current operational catalogue. The documents can be used independently to provide NHS organisations with generic templates for assessing the key issues associated with implementing catalogue/content management arrangements.

You will recall my letter last year which recommended that new product classification standards (NHS-eClass) be incorporated into purchasing records and electronic catalogues for all products and services purchased by the English NHS. There was also a recommendation to use suppliers' product codes to identify products in purchase transactions. You may wish to monitor progress in the implementation of these recommendations within your organisation.

You can download all of these documents from the Agency's website at: <http://www.pasa.doh.gov.uk/e-commerce/ecat/default.asp> The eCatalogue standards published on that site have also been agreed with colleagues in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

I encourage you to implement the standards across your organisation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Eaton', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Duncan Eaton
Chief Executive