Frequently Asked Questions – Connected Health

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Purpose of this document: To answer common questions **healthcare providers** may have about Connected Health certification, certified products, and the Connected Health Programme.

Questions (answered below)

Connected Health product certification

1. What does 'Connected Health certified' mean?

2. What are the advantages of using a Connected Health certified product?

3. What is the relationship between Connected Health specifications and Health Information Standards Organisation (HISO) Standards?

4. What does it mean if a product is certified with conditions?

5. What is the set of services and products that Connected Health is certifying?

Certified networking products

6. What Connected Health certified networking products and services are available now?

7. What happens to the existing Health Network?

8. What are the Network to Network Interface (NNI) and User to Network Interface (UNI) specifications that the networking products have been certified against?

9. Who has been involved in developing the NNI and UNI specifications?

Connected Health Programme

10. What is the purpose of Connected Health?

11. Who is responsible for the Connected Health Programme?

12. Where does the Connected Health Programme fit into the new National Health IT Plan?

13. Are there plans for the Connected Health Programme to develop other specifications and certify other IT products and services used in the health sector?

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Answers

Product Certification

1. **What does 'Connected Health certified' mean?**

   When an IT product or service is Connected Health certified it means that it has been assessed and confirmed to be compliant with criteria set by the Ministry of Health and agreed by the telecommunications industry. These criteria are specifications that enable the product or service to interoperate with the products or services of other IT suppliers.

   Before certifying a product or service, the supplier will have agreed with Connected Health Principles and Operating Policy that favour an open and competitive market (supplier accreditation).

2. **What are the advantages of using a Connected Health certified product?**

   For healthcare providers, the advantage of using a Connected Health certified product is that you will have access to the secure Connected Health network when it is established (target date is December 2010). This means you will be able to transfer information to other healthcare providers and access services on the network in a secure, reliable way, no matter which supplier provides the network to each participating healthcare provider.

   The Connected Health Network has been developed to meet the requirements of future sector initiatives, including National Health IT Plan initiatives such as eReferrals and eDischarges.

   The Connected Health Network will be the 'network of choice' for all future sector initiatives that transfer health information, and a requirement for business cases requiring National Health IT Board approval.

3. **What is the relationship between Connected Health specifications and Health Information Standards Organisation (HISO) Standards?**

   The Health Information Standards Organisation (HISO), an advisory group to the National Health IT Board, is approving many Connected Health specifications as they are developed.

   The networking standards are HISO-approved standards.

   Future specifications may also be approved by other standards organisations, or in some cases may not become a standard.

4. **What does it mean if a product is certified with conditions?**

   If a product is 'certified with conditions', the conditions relate to some changes that the product's supplier needs to make to comply with Connected Health specifications. A product will only be certified with conditions if the conditions do not impact the secure and reliable sharing of health information. The supplier has a set amount of time to meet the conditions or the product certification could be revoked. Conditions of certification for certified products can be found on the Health IT Board website at: www.ithealthboard.health.nz/connectedhealth/certifiedproducts.

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5. What is the set of services and products that Connected Health is certifying?

The Connected Health Programme is currently only developing specifications for, and certifying, networking products. These specifications ensure that the different networks of telecommunication providers can interconnect, therefore providing a seamless 'network of networks' joining up healthcare organisations.

Certified Networking Products

6. What Connected Health certified networking products and services are available now?

All certified products and services are listed on the National Health IT Board website at: www.ithealthboard.health.nz/connectedhealth/certifiedproducts.

7. What happens to the existing Health Network?

The current Health Network provides connectivity to the sector, but not entirely to the Connected Health specifications. Rather than migrating from this network to a new Connected Health Network, the compliant products within the existing Health Network are being certified and suppliers are being asked to address any non-compliant aspects of their products. For most suppliers, the key change is that they will be connecting to the more robust and fully managed interconnection points. Once these interconnection points are established (target date is December 2010), the existing Health Network will be integrated into the Connected Health Network.

This means existing Health Network users become part of the Connected Health Network, with very little or no effort on their behalf.

8. What are Network to Network Interface (NNI) and User to Network Interface (UNI) specifications that the networking products have been certified against?

The Network to Network Interface (NNI) and User to Network Interface (UNI) specifications outline the technical details concerning how network devices connect to each other and the speed, security and quality of the services enabled by those devices.

- The **NNI specifications** define the way in which Telecommunication Service Provider (TSP) networks connect to other TSP networks. For example, how data might get from TelstraClear to Telecom.

- The **UNI specifications** define how a Connected Health user connects to that network.

These specifications, along with a non-technical overview of them, can be found on the HISO web pages of the National Health IT Board website: http://www.ithealthboard.health.nz/advisory/hiso/published-standards

9. Who has been involved in developing the NNIs and UNIs?

The New Zealand Health IT Cluster (www.healthit.org.nz) has facilitated industry engagement for the development of the NNI and UNI specifications. Significant engagement and expert advice came from the Cluster's Standards Working Group, representing several telecommunications companies.

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Connected Health Overview

10. What is the purpose of Connected Health?

The purpose of the Connected Health Programme is to establish an environment for the safe sharing of health information.

The Connected Health environment being established by the Programme is a standards-based, commercial model for the delivery of universal connectivity across the New Zealand health sector.

11. Who is responsible for the Connected Health Programme?

The Connected Health Programme began in 2007 as a Ministry of Health initiative but now sits under the National Health Board Business Unit. The Programme has been governed by the Connected Health Project Board, which is made up of representatives from district health boards, Comprehensive Health Services, the National Health Board, the National Health IT Board, and an independent telecommunications consultant.

The New Zealand Health IT Cluster (www.healthit.org.nz) has also been an important partner to the Programme, facilitating engagement with health IT suppliers.

12. Where does the Connected Health Programme fit into the new National Health IT Plan?

The Connected Health Programme fits into Workstream 8 'Safe Sharing Foundation', under Phase 1 'Consolidate, Cooperate & Foundation' of the National Health IT Plan.

Implementing the Connected Health network for the safe sharing of health information is a pre-requisite for many of the initiatives described in the Plan, for example for eReferrals and eDischarges.

The National Health IT Plan can be found at http://www.ithealthboard.health.nz.

13. Are there plans for the Connected Health Programme to develop other specifications and certify other IT products and services used in the health sector?

The Connected Health Programme is scheduled to close in December 2010 after it has: 1) delivered safe and reliable network connectivity for the health sector and 2) established the model for the development of national standards, supplier accreditation and product certification.

Initiatives under the National Health IT Plan will continue to build upon the work delivered by the Connected Health Programme. The connectivity standards will be updated as required, as technology moves on. Further standards for other service layers, such as architecture (tier 2) and applications (tier 3) will be developed over the next four years. As these plans unfold, information will be published on the National Health IT Board website: www.ithealthboard.health.nz.

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