Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Chief Executives – Health Boards
Chief Executives – NHS Trusts
Chief Executive – HCW
Director, Delivery and Support Unit
Regional Directors

**Mr Paul Williams OBE OStJ DL**
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**Director General, Health & Social Services**
**Chief Executive, NHS Wales**

Eich cyf / Your ref:
Ein cyf / Our ref:   PMW/THOMAS/BS

9 March 2010

Dear Colleagues

## Outpatient Activity Data Validity Standards

This letter formally mandates the introduction of the Outpatient (OP) Activity Data Validity standards for NHS Wales.

OP activity data are submitted monthly to the national database at Health Solutions Wales (HSW) by Local Health Boards (LHBs) Trusts. The data are used to support the planning and management of healthcare services, the evaluation of NHS performance trends and costs, and is a valuable source of epidemiological data at both a national and local level. High quality data are essential if it is to be relied upon to support such processes in NHS Wales, as emphasised in the EH/ML/007/08 - Corporate Health Information Programme (CHIP) Data Quality Site Visits Review Recommendations. Furthermore, the lack of reliable information has been cited in a number of reports over the last 5 years, including (but not limited to):

- Review of Health & Social Care (Wanless Report)
- Designed for Life
- Spending by Design

These criticisms imply that the data are of insufficient quality to produce reliable information.

In order to help address issues of data quality across Wales, a Data Quality Improvement Project was established through the Corporate Health Information Programme (CHIP) in March 2007, which had the overall objective of raising the profile of data quality and implementing a revised approach with a view to securing demonstrable improvements.

Over the past two years a new set of data quality standards have been introduced for Admitted Patient Care (APC) activity data via WHC (2008) 007 and EH/ML/005/09. These have been fundamental in helping to improve the quality of reported APC activity data across Wales.

In order to ensure similar principles are applied to other national data sets, a new set of data validity standards are to be introduced for OP activity data, effective 1 April 2010. These will check submitted OP activity data to ensure submitted data is provided in the agreed format and is populated with a nationally agreed value, as defined in the NHS Wales Data Dictionary. They replace the Outpatient Data Accreditation Standards, which were initially mandated via WHC (99) 143 in September 1999.

It is firmly believed that the addition of these standards to those that already exist for APC activity data will improve the basis on which data quality performance is monitored across NHS Wales. Similar standards will be introduced across other national data sets (e.g. Outpatient Referrals, Emergency Department) in the coming months.

The proposals were approved for implementation by CHIP Assurance Group on 12 December 2008 following extensive consultation with the service, including all Local Health Boards, Trusts and end users of OP activity data.

The full set of OP Activity Data Validity Standards are outlined in **Appendix A**.

For further detail, readers should refer to the 'Outpatient Activity – Data Validity Standards' report, which is available via the CHIP website at http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/pmuw/chip or by contacting the Corporate Health Information Programme on 029 2020 7606.

**Actions Required**

Each Local Health Board and Trust is required to

- Ensure all OP activity data submissions conform to the OP Activity Data Validity Standards.

- Ensure the targets are achieved or exceeded for each standard outlined in Appendix A, taking appropriate corrective action when performance falls below the agreed criteria.

- Make use of the HSW Validation at Source Service (VASS) and any other local processes to improve the quality of the monthly OP activity data submissions, taking appropriate action where possible to correct incorrect data.

Health Solutions Wales (HSW) is required to:

- Ensure the continued functionality of Validation at Source Service (VASS) to allow Local Health Boards and Trusts to identify any data validity errors in their submitted OP activity data.

- Produce the Outpatient Activity Data Validity Performance Monitoring Report every month from 1 April 2010 onwards, to be made available on the Health of Wales Information Service (HOWIS) intranet.

**Monitoring Arrangements**

Compliance with these standards will be monitored through a series of online data validity reports, which will be produced and maintained by Health Solutions Wales and made available on the Health of Wales Information Service (HOWIS) intranet.

A quarterly data quality report will be prepared by CHIP for the Welsh Assembly Government.
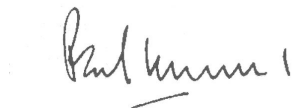
Any queries relating to the review and its recommendations should be directed to:

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Yours sincerely


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CC    Simon Dean, Director of Strategy & Planning, HSSDG, WAG

# APPENDIX A – OUTPATIENT ACTIVITY DATA VALIDITY STANDARDS

| # | Data Item / Quality Indicator | Target* (% Valid) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Administrative Category | 98% |
| 2 | Attendance Category | 98% |
| 3 | Attendance Date | 98% |
| 4 | Attended or Did Not Attend | 98% |
| 5 | Birth Date | 98% |
| 6 | Clinical Referral Date | 98% |
| 7 | Code of Registered GP Practice | 98% |
| 8 | Consultant Code | 98% |
| 9 | Date of Patient Referral | 98% |
| 10 | Organisation Code (Local Health Board of Residence) | 95% |
| 11 | Location Type Code | 98% |
| 12 | Main Specialty (of Consultant) | 98% |
| 13 | Medical Staff Type Seeing Patient | 95% |
| 14 | NHS Number | 95% |
| 15 | NHS Number Status Indicator | 95% |
| 16 | NHS Number Valid & Traced | 95% |
| 17 | Organisation Code (Code of Provider) | 98% |
| 18 | Outcome of Attendance | 98% |
| 19 | Postcode of Usual Address | 98% |
| 20 | Primary Procedure Code | 95% |
| 21 | Priority Type (New Patients) | 98% |
| 22 | Referrer Code | 98% |
| 23 | Referring Organisation Code | 98% |
| 24 | Sex | 98% |
| 25 | Site Code (of Treatment) | 98% |
| 26 | Source of Referral: Outpatients | 98% |
| 27 | Treatment Function Code (i.e. Specialty of Treatment) | 98% |

A data validity indicator will check whether submitted data is provided in the agreed format and is populated with a nationally-agreed value, as defined in the NHS Wales Data Dictionary.

* The target refers to the percentage of patient records on the outpatient activity national database that should be correctly populated with an acceptable value for the associated data item at any point in time.