CCIO Network ✚

The Newcastle Declaration

The 'Newcastle Declaration' – why citizens need far better information sharing across health and social care.

The 'Newcastle Declaration', jointly developed by front line clinical information leaders from across the NHS, at the 2015 CCIO Network Summer School, Newcastle, calls for a radical step change on interoperability (information sharing between different electronic systems) to enable truly joined up health and social care.

''We declare that, in order to provide safe and effective health and care for all citizens, health and care professionals require unimpeded access to all relevant information available on those they care for.

''Too often, health and care professionals today lack key information available on those they care for, and have to make treatment decisions without access to all of the currently available knowledge, such as previous care and test results. Citizens and patients deserve better.

''We therefore urge all involved in planning and delivery of health and social care, not least policy makers and system suppliers, to urgently to adopt five general interoperability principles and, to support them, five key technical interoperability principles.''

The five general interoperability principles:

1.   Complete, accurate and timely information fundamentally underpins safe and effective health and social care.

2.   Clinicians and social care providers require information to be routinely shared if they are to provide optimal care to patients and citizens.

3.   Patients and citizens have a right to expect that their information will be shared with their health and care teams along their journey, and that their consent to share or not share will be respected.

4.   Within the health and social care system it is the legally defined data controllers who must determine information sharing.

5.   Suppliers and healthcare providers must ensure the flow of data. It is unacceptable for any supplier or healthcare provider to impede the flow of citizen's health and care data for narrow organisational, commercial, or other reasons

To achieve ubiquitous interoperability, we further urge all those involved in specifying, purchasing or implementing systems across health and social care to adopt five key technical principles.

The five technical interoperability principles:

1.   All clinically relevant data held within supplier systems must be made available for use by any care setting, wherever and whenever required, subject to relevant security, information governance and consent requirements.

2.   It is the right and responsibility of the relevant data controllers to determine if clinically relevant data is transmitted between systems for viewing only or for storage and reuse.

3.   In support of principle 2 (above) suppliers must openly publish details of interfaces and provide these interfaces inclusively and without license fee.

4.   Wherever interface or message standards exist, and those standards are fit for purpose, suppliers must adopt those standards. Where standards do not exist, suppliers must collaborate with stakeholders to produce a consensus set of interfaces and messages.

5.   Wherever interfaces exist, suppliers must support and maintain system availability and performance them within the levels of service expected to support safe clinical care, in terms of system availability and performance.

The recent publication of the **Tech UK Interoperability Charter** is an extremely encouraging step, but the commitments set out need to be fully adhered to in both spirit and letter by all health and social care systems suppliers.

NHS and social care providers and commissioners have a key role to play and must require suppliers adhere to common standards, publication, support and maintenance of interfaces and APIs a core requirement of all future procurements and contracts.

The benefits of interoperability and information sharing are often distributed and systemic, which can make it hard for individual organisations to build business cases for investment in sharing. This is an area where the centre must provide additional support.

We call on all parties working across health and social care to support the 'Newcastle Declaration' to help build a safer, more joined-up health and social care system for all.

Dr Joe McDonald,
Chair of the CCIO Network on behalf of the CCIO Network

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