

Health Information Strategy Action Committee



Note from Paul Cressey

Chair of the Health Information Strategy Action Committee

I'm proud of the progress HISAC has made since we were established last August to lead the implementation of the Health Information Strategy for New Zealand (HIS-NZ). Back then we faced all the challenges of any new organisation including the need for staff, governance policies and operating systems. More importantly, we had to decide how we were going to tackle the 12 Action Zones in HIS-NZ. We are now close to achieving a common understanding within HISAC of what is covered by each of the Action Zones. We are looking forward to testing this understanding with the sector over the next four months as we develop more comprehensive pictures of what is required and how it can be implemented.

I had a lively session recently with the Chief Information Officers from the central region DHBs. They reinforced the need for strong, proactive leadership from HISAC to generate increased investment in information management systems, including systems to support primary care. They also gave us a timely reminder about the capacity of parts of the sector to absorb more changes. I'm looking forward to hearing what other CIOs have to say when I meet with them over the next two months.

The next six months will be a critical period for HISAC. We are anticipating some changes in membership through the appointments process currently underway. We expect to co-opt additional expertise onto our three sub-committees and we will be adding to the number and scope of the sector-based advisory and working groups.

I hope you enjoy reading about the highlights of our first six months and some more recent events.

Action Zone Initiation Process

At its first meeting, HISAC asked the HISAC Office to develop a rigorous process for taking oversight of existing and initiating new work in the Action Zones. In October HISAC approved the process which covers all stages from scoping of Action Zones, through the consideration of projects and business cases to initiating and monitoring implementation projects.

There are two steps in the scoping phase. The first is the development of an Initial View to ensure that HISAC and the HISAC Office start with a clear understanding of what the Action Zone covers. These are developed by the HISAC Office with one or two selected sector personnel and approved by HISAC. These Initial Views are not intended to be an exhaustive or a final statement of each Action Zone but rather an informed "straw man" view at a particular time.

The second stage is the HISAC Picture which expands on the Initial View through engagement with affected sector groups and specialist advisors.

When completed each Picture will provide a clear description of what is required and who needs to be involved to implement each Action Zone.

When all 12 Action Zone Pictures are complete, HISAC will develop a resilient Implementation Plan to replace the Roadmap appended to HIS-NZ.

Currently HISAC is completing the publication of three Initial Views, eLabs, ePharmacy and National Network Strategy, for distribution and publication on the HISAC Website. Sector engagement for the associated Action Zone Pictures will commence in March.

Improving New Zealanders' healthcare and health by having

• the right information

• in the right place

• at the right time

Sub-committee Reports

Infrastructure

This sub-committee has some key roles to play in implementing Action Zone 1 National Network Strategy. In particular, it will ensure that the Health Network continues to allow the safe and secure exchange of health information as the network evolves and more parts of the sector become regular users.

The sub-committee met for the first time in November and already plans to establish two expert working groups - a Health Network Technical Working Group and a Telehealth Reference Group. An earlier working group on Telehealth has identified many exciting possibilities. HISAC's Telehealth Reference Group will help shape a report from HISAC to the Minister on future development of Telehealth within Action Zone 1.

HISO

HISAC's Health Information Standards Sub-committee is still known as "HISO" to retain the benefits of the brand awareness developed by the Health Information Standards Organisation before it became part of HISAC.

Standards are specifications which define methods, processes or practices and provide a basis for consistent and acceptable levels of quality, performance, safety and reliability.

Standards currently under development by HISO will play important roles in the implementation of several Action Zones. The HISO Standard for Referrals, Status Reports and Discharges, for example, underpins Action Zone 6 Discharge Summaries and Action Zone 8 Electronic Referrals. When approved, this standard will enable greater national consistency in the quality of the information provided in hospital discharge summaries to primary care providers irrespective of where the patient is discharged. It will also assist clinicians communicate electronically with other care providers about the treatment of their patients.

The already published New Zealand Pathology Observation Code Sets (Orders and Results) and the Pathology and Radiology Messaging standard (under development) will support the eLab Action Zone. HISAC has recently directed HISO to prepare a proposal for a HISO Medicines Terminology Standard that will underpin the ePharmacy Action Zone.

HISO sets up Expert Advisory Committees to develop its standards. Having the right mix of people on these committees helps ensure that the content of a standard is relevant, credible and broadly acceptable. Development of a standard can take up to 2 years.

Put HISAC's web-site on your list of favourites
www.hisac.govt.nz

National Collections

This sub-committee will meet for the first time in May 2006. Its role is to provide stewardship for the national collections which includes oversight of the Ministry of Health's role as the collections custodian. Currently there are about 50 national collections. Well-known examples include the National Immunisation Register, the Mortality Collection and the National Health Index. Some proposed new ones, with their own Action Zones in the Health Information Strategy for New Zealand 2005, are the National Primary Care Collection and the National Outpatient Collection.

Stakeholder Communications

HISAC has developed and started implementing a Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Strategy. Our web-site went live in December and we want to expand our contact list of stakeholders. If you know of people or organisations who should be on our lists please e-mail enquiries@hisac.govt.nz.

Appointments to HISAC

The terms of the current HISAC members ended on 28 February 2006. The nominations process closed before Christmas and the Minister of Health is likely to announce the new membership in March. HISAC has up to 12 members nominated by the health sector.

HISAC Office

HISAC's first search for a HISAC Manager and Programme Manager HISAC was not successful. A new recruitment process will start shortly. In the meantime, Helen Algar will continue as Acting HISAC Manager.

Engaging and working with the sector is essential to HISAC so if you would like HISAC representatives to participate in any sector forums or meetings about HIS-NZ or HISAC, please contact Bev Abbott on 04 460 4058.

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