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Health Service Executive

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**Re: Security Certificates**

Dear Doctor,

This letter follows my previous communication dated 18 December 2015 and provides a further update on the security certificate migration which must be completed during this year.

The feedback provided by doctors has been incorporated into the design of the new arrangements. Please see the enhanced FAQs enclosed including a number of questions posed by doctors.

Based on feedback provided the following arrangements will apply:

- **Shared Staff Members:** The situation where individual staff members support more than one doctor within the practice can be accommodated. In addition, switching from one doctor to another is also achieved with the click of a button, e.g. to input claims.
- **Improved Local Control:** "Accounts" for staff members in your practice and changing who can see itemised listings can be controlled with the click of a button.
- **Single Certificate Per Device:** One security certificate per device e.g. Personal Computer, will be sufficient. The installation details and instructions when multiple users share a device are currently being finalised.

We will write to you again with a PIN to help with a once off "**transition**" to access these new features. This will involve using the PCRS system to create user accounts and to link to other doctors within the practice.

When you have completed the transition to access the new features, the combination of a PCRS certificate and a user account will provide access to the PCRS system.

We look forward to your continued co-operation with this project and look forward to commencing the transition in approximately one month from now. Any additional feedback can be supplied by email to me at [ivan.mcconkey@hse.ie](mailto:ivan.mcconkey@hse.ie) with the subject "Security Certificate Project".

Yours sincerely,

Ivan McConkey  
Director of Information Systems

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q1: What is this all about?**

Globally, security certificates are being strengthened and this must be completed before the end of 2016. Various advisory notes are available on the subject as follows;

- <https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/security/2880823.aspx>
- <https://googleonlinesecurity.blogspot.ie/2014/09/gradually-sunset-sha-1.html>

### **Q2: What do I need to do now?**

Users of old computing infrastructure, e.g. operating systems such as Windows XP and old browser versions should make plans to support SHA-2 security certificates. At the end of 2016, inability to support SHA-2 certificates may limit or prevent use of the internet altogether for access to many web sites.

PCRS will issue the new certificates in a similar manner to the standard renewal and you should follow the instructions provided carefully.

### **Q3: What will happen to the existing PCRS issued certificates on my computer?**

These will become less relevant and will stop working or will expire during the course of 2016. However, you will have a new certificate in place before that happens to ensure uninterrupted access.

### **Q4: Will existing certificates continue to be renewed?**

For now, yes. There will be no change until there is further communication. This means that as existing certificates expire these must be renewed to maintain your access to the PCRS GP Application Suite.

### **Q5: Will the new certificates work on Tablet devices?**

Yes. The new certificates support tablet devices with Android, Apple and Windows operating systems.

### **Q6: Will Primary Care Contractors still be able to use all existing technology, e.g. Windows XP etc.?**

The HSE has not prescribed which technology should be adopted to support SHA-2 certificates. This choice remains in the hands of the Primary Care Contractor so long as the choice means they can support the required security level, i.e. SHA-2. In an engagement with the Data Protection commissioner in 2015, the expectation was evident that health actors must be very careful to be taking care of data properly including the obligation to ensure that older unsecure technology could not compromise data safety.

The HSE PCRS will not be in a position whereby it would maintain access to unsecure older versions of technology in such a way as to increase levels of risk. Primary Care Contractors have an obligation to ensure appropriately secure technology is used in their own right as data controllers.

**Q7: Would the same login work on multiple computers in the same practice?**

Yes. With the proviso that each computer will need to have a PCRS security certificate installed, then irrespective of the number of staff in the practice or the number of GPs who work together, then any staff member could use any of the practice computers to work for any of the doctors.

Please note that for each GMS contracted doctor there is an “Administrator” power under the control of the contracted doctor. It is this power which will allow the practice to set things up to suit the local operation and it can be delegated if wished by the contracted doctor to a staff member(s) of choice.

In other words, the additional flexibility and ease of use is still under the control of the practice.

**Q8: Will the new system mean that you no longer have to switch between panel logins?**

The new system makes this process easier and quicker. At all times a staff member using the system will know which doctor they are “working for” and when they need to change, the click of a button, will show the “linked” doctors and the switch is completed by selecting a different doctor.

Of course, switching is only possible between doctors who have requested to work together through the request and accept model.

**Q9: Thank you for your notification of this project. Currently we have 8 machines being used by doctors and admin staff in our Practice. We have two doctors and some of the machines have certs loaded for both doctors. As far as I understand you are now proposing that each machine will have only one cert and both GMS numbers will access PCRS using the same cert?**

This is correct and a good real life case to consider. We are aware that in some cases, such a practice might have many PCRS certificates installed. After the “transition” this practice will need only a single certificate for each machine and this could in fact be the one certificate acquired from PCRS and installed on each of the machines.

Once a PCRS certificate is installed on the machines then any of the doctors and admin staff can use any of the machines with their PCRS “account”.

The installation details and instructions when multiple users share a machine are currently being finalised.

**Q10: I am planning to upgrade my operating system to Windows 10. Will this work with the new certificates?**

Yes, Windows 10 will work with new certificates.

**Q11: Please can you advise what action I need to take to ensure that at least two more devices in this practice can access the HSE PCRS and GP application suite. At present we only have one certificate/licence on one device and this is very limited especially when we function between two floors. Your help in this matter would be greatly appreciated.**

This is another good real life case to consider. After the transition to the new model, each of the staff members / doctors working in the practice can have their own "account".

Then the practice can either (a) move the one PCRS certificate to the two additional devices or (b) contact PCRS as normal to request a certificate and download this unto each of the additional devices.

Please note that the movement of certificates from device to device (option "a" above) can be subject to local infrastructural knowledge, however, the PCRS team will provide what assistance we can and if any difficulty is encountered we would suggest to download a cert to each device from PCRS.

**Q12: I practice in an 8 doctor partnership. I wonder if there is any way that our 8 certificates could be linked in any way so that we could access any of the 8 accounts. With the advent of the Diabetic cycle of care, when patients are first seen they have to be registered. It often happens that patients who always see me are actually on another of my partners' GMS list. As I only have my own certificate on my machine, I can't log on and do the necessary there and then. I have to depend on remembering later to get another of my partners to do it. It is quite frustrating.**

Yes. The new approach resolves this issue. Following the transition, the partner doctors will be able to link to each other using the "request and accept" model. This is available in real time at the click of a button without interacting with PCRS.

Links can be undone just as easily if required in future. In addition, linking is available to doctors/staff members with the "Administrator" power so that there is a control available to doctors on this feature.