

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

Introduction

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is a net running cost Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). We receive approximately 80% of funding from industry regulatory fees and levies and the remainder from Defra.

The VMD's primary purpose is to deliver the UK's obligations under harmonised EU legislation on veterinary medicines and medicated feeding stuffs.

The VMD's vision is the responsible, safe and effective use of veterinary medicinal products.

The Government priorities to tackle the deficit and create a business environment that supports economic growth will continue to shape the VMD's activities in the years ahead. The VMD will contribute to Defra's work to deliver efficiently, continually striving to be the best, focussed on outcomes and constantly challenging itself. We will examine our processes and implement "digital by default" solutions that improve our efficiency and the services we provide to our customers. We will support Defra's aims to improve collaborative working across Government and the Defra Data campaign, publishing datasets as open data wherever possible.

This high level strategy document sets out how our Information and Communications Technology (ICT) will support and enhance the VMD's activities during 2016-2017, as set out in our Business Plan, with a forward look to 2017-2018 and beyond. Our strategic goals are closely linked to those of Defra and the European Union Drug Regulatory Authorities (Eudra) network.

Our Vision

To provide information services that are fit for purpose, affordable, sustainable, responsive to the VMD business and valued by stakeholders and VMD staff alike. To fully integrate the VMD within the EU information landscape and so promote us as the agency of choice within a competitive marketplace. To provide the VMD with secure information assets that promote collaborative working and knowledge sharing, enabling VMD staff to deliver value for money, customer-centric services. To fully support the Government's digital agenda by improving and extending electronic ways of working for VMD staff and our customers.

Our Obligations

The VMD must ensure that our development standards are compatible with Defra, European and international standards and that our systems can be easily integrated with them, facilitating electronic information exchange and knowledge sharing.

The VMD must maintain strong links with the core Department, supporting Defra's aims and objectives and we are becoming increasingly involved in Defra's initiatives, particularly in areas such as information security and assurance and sustainable development. We must fully support Defra's digital strategy, developing our systems

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

in line with Cabinet Office guidelines, sharing best practice and investigating opportunities to develop systems in conjunction with other Government organisations.

The VMD's published information now resides on GOV.UK, providing our customers with a central repository of Government information. We will continue to provide electronic services via our online systems, maintaining and improving these services in response to feedback from our customers and in line with Government Digital Services guidelines and Open Data initiatives.

Service Delivery

The in-house Information Technology (IT) team provide cost effective, fit for purpose information systems and services to the VMD. We have explored alternative methods of service delivery to ensure that we are providing the best value for money for the VMD and its customers and will continue to investigate other options.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy 2016-2017

[VMD Business Plan 2014/15-2018/19](#)

The main aims of the proposed ICT strategy for this financial year are to support the ongoing business requirements of the VMD, especially in relation to the EU Telematics governance structure and Defra's digital strategy. The majority of our objectives reflect the ongoing incremental and evolutionary development of existing ICT services and systems. ICT services are provided in an affordable and sustainable way by the VMD in-house IT team with the minimum use of contractors. All VMD information systems and services comply with Open Systems standards.

We will continue to work to deliver the Government's vision for full electronic service delivery "digital by default", maintaining and enhancing the existing online services for our most regular transactions, such as applications for import and export certificates, providing new online systems and services as required.

The data landscape within which the VMD exists is increasingly Eurocentric and there is a significant additional emphasis on developing these data flows using Service Orientated Architecture (SOA). We will continue to integrate and align where appropriate our systems and databases as part of the EU Telematics programme to allow for the exchange, storage and retrieval of information on veterinary medicinal products authorised in the EU and pharmacovigilance information for such products. We fully support the EMA's SPOR (Substances, Products, Organisations, Referentials) programme, introducing international standards for identifying medicinal information that encompass ISO IDMP (Identification of Medicinal Products) and HL7 (Health Level 7).

We continue to seek cost saving measures where they can be achieved without a reduction in quality or service and to fully explore ways of obtaining the full potential and value for money from our ICT system developments. We will follow Defra procurements routes, buying from small or medium-sized, local businesses wherever possible and using the "Cloud First" principles for larger purchases, using free or open source where applicable.

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

We will fully support Defra's Digital Strategy and the EMA's new Telematics governance structure and strategic aims.

ICT Projects 2016/17

Digital Strategy

Our Digital by Default objectives this year are to continue to provide developments that fully support the VMD's business needs, but to also ensure we are compliant with EU and Defra's ICT strategies and the Government Digital Service (GDS).

Our strategy is to provide improved online facilities for our customers, improving the timeliness and accuracy of the information and streamlining some application processes.

- We will continue to enhance our online services in response to feedback from our customers
- We will complete the data hub for antibiotic use data and the data exchange tool for ESVAC
- We will continue to apply enhancements to the Special Imports online system to apply further efficiencies and improve the experience for veterinary surgeons using the site. We will add the facility to import Wholesale Dealer Import Certificates (WDIC)
- We will carry out the longer term developments to our online Product Information Database (PID) incorporating an XML structure to enable veterinary surgeons to download accurate Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) information and incorporate it in their practice systems
- We will continue to improve and optimise our eSubmission and eFiling systems, encouraging wider use of the Common European Submission Portal (CESP) by Industry and improving the integration with our systems. We will continue to incorporate and improve eFiling modules in our in-house systems

Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM)

Our EDRM strategy is to ensure our systems are compatible with Defra and Public Records Office (PRO) standards whilst supporting the VMD's business requirements. A document management culture has been established at the VMD and we are maintaining documents and records electronically.

This year we will:

- migrate to the latest version of eDocs, DM v.10.1 to improve the performance of the system and provide additional facilities for our staff. This is a cost effective solution as it is simply a version upgrade and the migration will involve less risk than moving to a new software solution

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

- maintain and enhance the File Management System, ensuring PRO requirements for paper and electronic records are fully managed by the system
- continue to apply further integrations between the DMS and our in-house systems so the work processes and workflows are seamless

Information Security

Our Information Security strategy is to ensure that we protect the data that we hold responsibly and safely and to reassure our customers that we hold their information securely and regard the continuity of our business services as paramount. The main projects this year are to:

- maintain the VMD's Information Security Management System (ISMS) through the programme of internal and external ISO 27001 audit reviews and to carry out the annual risk assessment and support the external renewal audit
- continue our programme to ensure all portable IT equipment that holds sensitive data, including laptops, Blackberries, data storage devices, etc. and any PCs that are used offsite for VMD work are encrypted
- extend the project to providing Virtual Desktop for our Inspection teams and other remote workers
- continue to strengthen our backup and contingency arrangements using the data mirroring site, investigating alternative arrangements that provide improved services. This is especially important now that most of our work is carried out electronically
- continue to carry out tests to confirm the effectiveness of the continual data transfer and our ability to provide contingency support by switching to the external site
- support VMD wide tests of our overall Business Contingency Plan (BCP) and implement any changes that are recommended following the test review.

Modular Systems

The VMD Modular Systems are the suite of in-house systems that have been designed and developed to support specific business requirements. The systems are developed using the same template to minimise change management and facilitate rapid application development. This suite of integrated IT systems is key to the efficient operation of the VMD, providing monitoring and tracking functionality that help us to meet our targets, improving the timeliness and quality of company documentation through the automatic generation of letters and emails.

The ISO 27001 certification process covers all dimensions of the security of VMD information assets including the quality assurance and quality control measures within the VMD in-house system development method. This method was used to develop the new Modular Systems template in .Net technology.

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

This year, we will:

- continue to support and enhance the Modular Systems, incorporating new business requirements to improve the efficiency and functionality of the systems
- implement a new Graphical User Interface (GUI) to modernise the system template and make it more streamlined and easier to use. We propose to incorporate the new GUI in all the Modular Systems, whilst updating the technical template of the remaining older systems to VB.Net
- continue to incorporate eFiling modules and automatically generated documents and emails as required.

European Initiatives

Veterinary Dictionary for Drug Regulatory Activities (VEDDRA)

The VEDDRA system is updated each year to update the symptoms and terms in the database. Both VMD and Committee for Veterinary Products for Veterinary use (CVMP) versions of VEDDRA will be updated and implemented live on 1 October 2016.

EU Telematics Projects:

The VMD have a commitment to play an active role in the development and ongoing maintenance of European IT systems and to ensure that the VMD's systems are compatible. In order to do this effectively, the IT team will continue to participate appropriately in relevant committees and working groups such as the EU IT Directors Group and working groups for Veterinary eSubmission, the Common EU Submission Platform (CESP) and the EU Common Repository. We will:

- continue to provide full support to the EU Veterinary Medicinal Product (EUVMP) database and associated systems
- contribute to the work of the EU Network Data Board
- continue to support the data exchanges with EudraVigilance and the EUVMP database, redeveloping as required to support changing business needs and improve performance
- provide technical advice and support to VMD users and ensure that the VMD's interests are represented on a technical level in the European arena
- support the use of common standards in all our systems

Electronic Submission:

The IT team will:

- continue to play a leading role in the eSubmission of licensing dossiers within the EU via the veterinary Change Harmonisation Group, making sure we are aware if any proposed changes to the VNeS guidance
- keep a watching brief on eSubmission activities in the human arena
- provide full support for the VMD's eSubmission project and any further developments that are required to enhance our eSubmission Management and eNTA Scanning systems
- be fully involved in the VMD European Steering Committee and its activities

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

Substances, Products, Organisations & Referentials (SPOR)

We will maintain an active interest in the progress of the SPOR programme to ensure that we are able to exchange information in the agreed format and meet project targets to implement changes to the lookup lists and controlled terms we use in our systems.

Benchmarking European Medicines Agencies (BEMA):

The IT team will maintain the system to manage the BEMA benchmarking process, assessment reports and related documentation for EU Member State (MS) agencies, liaising with the BEMA secretariat based in Croatia. The system is currently used by the BEMA Steering Group via web access and further discussions about the future of the system will take place at Heads of Medicines Agencies meetings.

Closer collaboration in Europe

The IT team are active participants in the EU IT Directors Group that is comprised of Heads of IT or Information and their equivalents from Member State regulatory agencies. The role of the committee is to help to oversee the implementation of the EU ICT strategy, improve communication links on technical issues between the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and MS regulatory agencies and promote best practice of IT systems development and service delivery in the EU.

Finance IT Systems

The IT team will:

- continue to work together with Finance Branch to improve the efficiency of Finance IT systems and reduce the amount of external consultancy support required by bringing the work in house where possible
- fully support the project to upgrade or replace the Finance accounting system and implement a new system that will provide improved efficiency in our work processes

Configuration & Service Desk

This year we plan to:

- continue to refresh our equipment where some of the desktop devices are no longer fit for purpose. We will do this in a managed way, replacing faulty and old equipment first and causing as little disruption to the business as possible.
- ensure members of VMD staff have suitable equipment that provides full support for eSubmission and eFiling working practices
- continue to support remote workers, trialling a variety of portable devices as more suitable tools for them, extending the project to deploy tablets to our Inspectors with Virtual Desktop as a secure alternative enabling lower specification equipment to be used. A solution that has been well received
- ensure all permanent members of VMD staff have a laptop which enables them to take advantage of their use at meetings, saving on paper and giving them the ability to work remotely when necessary

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

Sustainable Development

The VMD's IT team will:

- continue to work in conjunction with Defra's Green ICT programme to improve the energy efficiency of ICT equipment and service delivery. Our plans are part of the VMD's overall Sustainable Development programme and we will continue to implement improvements during the coming year
- embed sustainable development principles into our business processes, particularly in areas such as procurement, where energy saving has become a high priority when selecting equipment. Our increasing use of electronic communications to replace face to face meetings and VMD projects such as the electronic submission of company dossiers and eFiling are all helping us to reduce our impact on the environment. Costs of travel, time, paper storage and resources such as paper and printing are continually being reduced
- continue to communicate energy saving methods to VMD staff and evaluate automated devices for saving energy.

Future proposals include

Over the next 3 years our ICT strategy will support the aims and objectives as laid out in the VMD's Business Plans.

Configuration Management: to keep the VMD IT services and systems in line with prevailing technology and in step with Defra, the EMA and other European Regulatory Agencies and our customers and stakeholders.

Modular Systems: to implement the progressive programme to incorporate new facilities and functionalities in all the existing Modular Systems, applying the new technological platform as it is refined to support business requirements in one work area so it other teams will benefit from the enhancements. We aim to develop new and extend current in-house systems in line with changing business needs during 2016-2019.

Electronic Document and Records Management: to continue to enhance our current system to support the business. To continue to develop VMD IT systems in support of the Public Records Office target for Electronic Records Management in conjunction with Defra's chosen programme.

European IT Systems: to ensure that the VMD's IT systems are fully aligned with those in Europe so that our European licensing work is wholly supported and our position in the forefront of the market place is maintained. To monitor regulatory changes in Europe so that the VMD's Modular systems can be amended to support new requirements as they occur.

Electronic Submission: to continue our project to facilitate the electronic submission of licensing applications by enhancing and improving our support systems and to continue to participate in European Electronic Submission initiatives, maintaining an active role in the relevant EU working parties during 2015-19.

VMD INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY 2016/2017

ISO 27001 Certification: to maintain our ISO 27001 certification for information security through a programme of continual improvement against the standard and to continue to participate in the project to comply with Cabinet Office targets. In addition, we will again consider extending the scope of our Information Security Management System during 2015-19.

PSN Certification: to maintain the security of our network in line with Public Secure Network requirements and to submit our return, highlighting any changes, to our Departmental Security Officer each year to ensure we comply with Defra's certification.

Digital by Default: to continue to extend the electronic services that we provide to our customers and internally, keeping pace with the Government Digital Services project.

Open Data: in line with the Defra Open Data Strategy, we aim to apply transparency principles with the publishing of data, as part of our day to day business.

Sustainability: to continue to support Defra's Green ICT programme, adopting new electronic working methods and exploring further measures to reduce our overall carbon footprint during 2015-19.

Accessibility: to continue to embed accessibility standards in all our ICT projects, working towards WA1 AA standards and meeting Cabinet Office requirements for our web developments (online systems and Intranet) over the next three years.

Externally driven requirements: extensive antibiotic surveillance activities, the new European Legislation with implications for applications and pharmacovigilance and European Interoperability are all drivers that may require further ICT developments to support them.
