

Data Releases – Status Update

Report to the HSCIC Board

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Background

The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) is the organisation responsible for providing the trusted safe haven for storing and analysing the nation's health and care information as well as delivering the systems that enable information both to be used to support an individual's care, and to deliver better, more effective health and care services for whole communities.

The Review of data releases by the NHS Information Centre published on 17 June set out a series of commitments to guarantee greater openness and reassurance to the public, stricter controls over data use and better clarity for data users. Building and sustaining public trust and confidence in the way public data is collected, stored and used, safely and appropriately is paramount. The HSCIC Register was published for the first time in April 2014 and will be published quarterly. It contains details of all data releases that have been approved and released by the HSCIC since its inception in April 2013.

The focus on transparency and the review into the HSCIC's management of data releases resulted in a backlog of customer requests. The delays are also a result of important measures being introduced to strengthen our governance arrangements for the release of data and the introduction of revised policies and procedures for managing releases are in place.

The approach we are taking is one that must balance the desire for customers to access good quality data with the need for that data to be governed in a robust and transparent manner. The purpose of this paper is to inform the HSCIC's board of the status of the pipeline of requests and the work being undertaken to clear the pipeline of requests.

Work Underway

At the beginning of June a team was created to manage the backlog and related work. At present just over 16 additional Full Time Equivalent staff have been assigned to this and that is in addition to the teams whose substantive role is to manage data requests. The focus of the team is to:

1. Clear the backlog of delayed customer requests and introduce accurate and transparent reporting on the backlog
2. Introduce coordinated and effective customer relationship management
3. Inform the development of improved policies, processes and systems
4. Provide operational support to *ad hoc* work items, such as complaints handling
5. Provide coordinated communications in relation to the backlog and wider matters arising from the Health Select Committee meetings and subsequent review.

Current Status

Clear Understanding

Our first priority has been to understand the size and nature of the backlog and this has required us to draw together data from multiple sources within our organisation. We now have all active items recorded in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and we have made changes to the system to ensure we capture the data necessary to support reporting, including the identification of backlog items.

The definition being used to identify backlog items is “requests received up to the end of February 2014” since this is the date at which the review came into effect. At the time of this report there are some items (fewer than 60) where we still need to verify the request dates. Until we have verified the dates, we will treat them as having been received prior to the pause and so as contributing to the backlog figure.

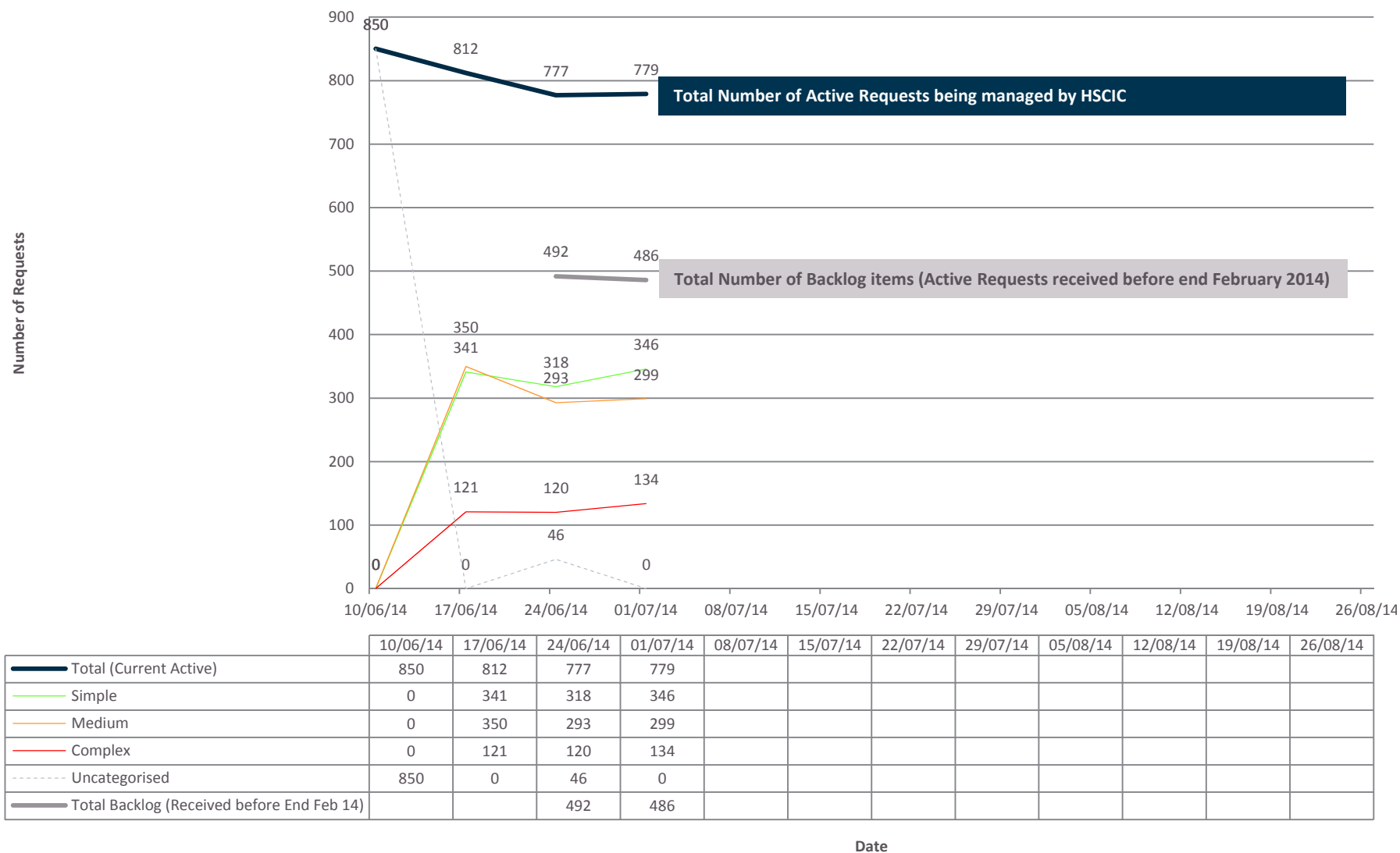
The information in the first graph (page 5) shows the total number of active requests being dealt with by the HSCIC and breaks these down by their level of complexity. It also shows the number of items that have not yet been categorised (dotted grey line). The relevance of the complexity categorisation is that it enables us to understand the likely timescales for dealing with the active items. The second graph (page 6) focuses on backlog items and breaks these down by level of complexity.

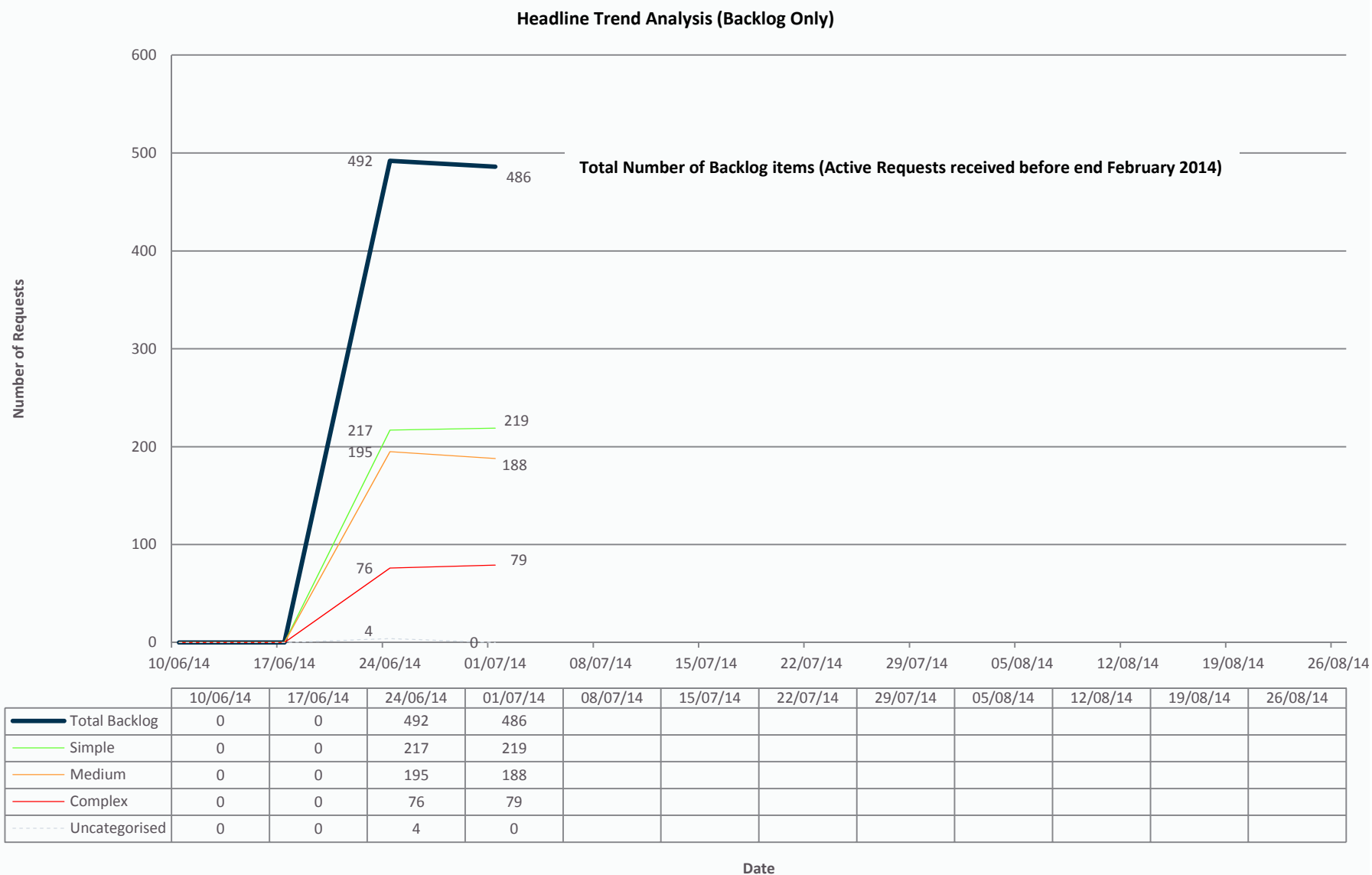
The criteria for determining the categorisation of requests as Simple, Medium or Complex are as follows:

Complexity	Criteria	Time to Decision
Simple	Applications for Pseudonymous/Non-Sensitive Data Simple Amendments Renewals	15 Weeks
Medium	Applications for Identifiable and/or Sensitive Data (including or excluding ONS data) with Section 251 Legacy Cases	17 Weeks
Complex	Applications for Identifiable and/or Sensitive Data with consent or other legal basis Complex amendments	20 Weeks

“Time to Decision” means the estimated average time between receiving a request and reaching a decision on whether to release the requested data. Some cases are exceptionally complex and will take significantly longer to process. There will also be variation in the time it takes for data to be released following approvals being granted. In some cases data will be ready to flow and will do so almost immediately. In other cases, for example where there is a dependency on the customer or another third party also providing data, there may be a delay of days or weeks. We endeavour to ensure any delays are minimised and notified to customers as early as possible.

Headline Trend Analysis (Numbers and Complexity of Requests) - ACTUALS





Prioritisation

Although the main focus of the team is to clear the backlog, requests have been received since February and in some cases the customers who made these requests have already waited 4 months. It is essential therefore that we deal with all requests and that we adopt an intelligent approach to their prioritisation so that the greatest value to the health and care sectors can be delivered most quickly.

In order to make some progress for those customers who have waited longest, our approach to date has been to prioritise backlog items and specifically simple cases and renewals. We are now looking at how we can adopt a more sophisticated approach that will enable us to process new requests ahead of backlog items where there is good reason to think that this will deliver greatest benefit to the health and care sectors.

Forecasting and Steady State

We now have a clearer understanding of the backlog and all active requests and we have some estimates around the average expected times to process different categories of request. Our next step is to model the likely throughput, which will in turn enable us to forecast future steady state volumes and the time it will take us to reach that steady state.

As soon as we have completed this work, we will include the data in regular published reports. Our intention is for this to be in place by the end of July.

Next Steps

1. Develop an enhanced method for prioritising active requests
2. Continue to clear the backlog, while also managing new requests
3. Continue to address issues and complaints raised by our customers
4. Develop the Pipeline Tracker to enable transparent progress reporting for all requests
5. Model the rate at which work will progress through the process and derive a reliable forecast for all requests in the system
6. Coordinate and manage communications in relation to all aspects of this work

Actions Required of the Board

Paper provided for information only, but feedback on approach and reporting is welcomed.