

## Interpreting response data from the Central Alerting System (CAS)

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## 1. About this document

This document should be used in conjunction with the monthly updated spreadsheet of response data for National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) alerts issued via the Central Alerting System for implementation by **NHS trusts** in England.

***NB: Queries relating to individual NHS Trust responses should be directed to the trust***

From March 2012, the data will appear on the DH Transparency site and updated on the last Thursday of every month:

<http://transparency.dh.gov.uk/>

Previous spreadsheets (from January 2011-February 2012) are available on the NPSA's website:

<http://www.nrls.npsa.nhs.uk/patient-safety-data/>

To View the CAS website: <https://www.cas.dh.gov.uk/Home.aspx>

For CAS user help information: <https://www.cas.dh.gov.uk/Help/Help.aspx>

## 2. About the Central Alerting System

The Central Alerting System (CAS) is a web-based system for issuing patient safety alerts and other safety critical guidance to the NHS and others, including independent providers of health and social care, in England only. CAS was introduced in September 2008, replacing the previous Safety Alert Broadcast System (SABS) and the Public Health Link (PHL).

Alerts are a key way to help trusts improve the quality of care they provide, and give them an opportunity to demonstrate their accountability for the safety of patients.

NHS trusts in England are required to respond to alerts and to indicate, using CAS, when they have completed the actions required to implement alerts, or to confirm that no action is required.

CAS relies on self-certification. Trusts are responsible for the accuracy of the information they provide.

There are a number of limitations with the data contained in the spreadsheet, as outlined in Section 3.

### 3. Understanding the response data

This section provides a brief overview to help understand the CAS data contained in the spreadsheet.

#### 3.1 Overview of the data

The data presents a snapshot in time and reflects trusts' responses to NPSA alerts on the date the spreadsheet was created (the spreadsheet includes a date to indicate when the data was extracted).

CAS is not a performance monitoring system, and therefore definite assertions of 'compliance' cannot be made based on CAS data alone; the response data can only be viewed as an indicator. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has developed two CAS indicators for inclusion in the Quality and Risk Profile (QRP) for trusts.

#### 3.2 Comparing trusts

All alerts are issued to all trust types, regardless of the alert topic's relevance to a particular trust.

Where the subject matter of the alert is not relevant to a trust the response 'no action required' is appropriate.

The number of NPSA alerts requiring implementation varies on a trust by trust basis, and is dependent on the size of the trust, the type of trust, local population and services offered. For example, an ambulance trust will have less alerts to implement compared to an acute trust. Similarly, a large acute trust may have more alerts to implement than a smaller trust.

***Any comparison across trusts should therefore be treated with caution and take into account these variables.***

### 4. Using the spreadsheet

The spreadsheet displays rows of data with the following information as column headings:

- SHA name
- Trust name
- Alert title
- Alert reference
- Issue date
- Completion deadline date
- Current status

You can view the data in a number of ways by filtering on the column headings. Below are two examples.

## Example one

Checking responses made to NPSA alerts by an individual trust:

- Select the drop down arrow in the 'Trust name' column, and scroll down the list to select a particular trust.
- You will be able to view the NPSA alerts issued to that trust and what status has been recorded on CAS for each one.

## Example two

Checking the names and amount of trusts that have recorded completion on CAS for a particular alert:

- Select the drop down arrow in the 'Alert title' column heading to select a particular alert.
- Choose a status option using the drop down arrow in the 'Current Status' column to list, for example, the trusts that have recorded 'completed' or 'action not required' on CAS.

## 5. Interpreting trust responses on CAS

### 5.1 Response types

On CAS, trusts can select from six response types. These are:

- Acknowledged
- Assessing relevance
- Action not started
- Action required: ongoing
- Action not required
- Action completed

### 5.2 Signing off alerts

To sign-off an alert trusts can state '**Action not required**' or '**Action completed**'

#### 5.2.1 Action not required

Indicates that having considered the alert carefully and having consulted colleagues as necessary, it is clear that the action required in the alert is not relevant to the NHS trust.

### **5.2.2 Action completed**

Indicates that the NHS trust considers it has carried out all the actions stated in the alert that are applicable. The trust should be fully compliant with the requirements set out in the alert and processes should be in place to address ongoing requirements, such as training.

### **5.3 NHS trusts listed in the spreadsheet**

CAS aims to be a complete dataset and contains historic SABS data back to 2004. NHS trust names can change over time (for example new trusts can be created following a merger whilst others cease). The data in the spreadsheet lists current trusts and old trusts that no longer exist. Old trusts that ceased to exist prior to the introduction of CAS appear in lower case.

### **5.4 Re-issued alerts**

Occasionally alerts are re-issued or a followed-up via CAS to provide further clarification.

Re-issued alerts carry an instruction for the trust to close off the original alert and action the updated alert, to ensure consistency.

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For earlier reissued alerts the compliance status may not be consistent when viewing all trust responses by 'alert reference'.

### **5.5 Data from Safety Alert Broadcast System (SABS) and Public Health Link (PHL)**

CAS includes data from SABS and PHL systems. The accuracy of this data cannot be guaranteed.

## **6. Further information**

NHS trusts with technical queries can email the CAS Helpdesk:  
safetyalerts@dh.gsi.gov.uk