**Benchmarking of Data Security and Protection Toolkit**

*In May this year, Audit Yorkshire invited our member and client organisations to participate in a benchmarking exercise in relation to the new Data Security and Protection Toolkit. In this briefing, Susan Hall, our Information Governance Specialist Lead, introduces the results of the analysis and looks forward to the next round of Toolkit audits.*

**Joining Forces**

Thank you to the SIROs and IG Leads who responded to our invitation to participate in a regional DSPT benchmarking exercise. In collaboration with our colleagues at 360 Assurance, our purpose was to provide organisations with insights into how their self-assessment responses compared to those of their peers.

Based on the submissions of 16 large and 17 small organisations across our combined client base, the results of the benchmarking exercise are now available.

**Outcome**

The report, attached for your information, draws out a number of headline messages and observations from the first year of the toolkit self-assessments.



A key finding is the wide variation in responses, attributable in part to the ambiguities in some of the assertions. Whilst direct comparisons were impeded, to some extent, by the prevalence of free text responses, we trust that the evidence base provided by the paper will be of benefit as you reflect on your own experience of interacting with the DSPT.

**The Way Ahead**

The results of the benchmarking exercise, along with reviews of last year’s Toolkit audit programme, will inform our approach to DSPT audits in 2019-20. In common with our colleagues across the Internal Audit Network, we are seeking to ensure we reflect some of the nuances of the toolkit and focus on adding maximum value to our members and clients.

There is particular interest in the option of a two-stage approach to Toolkit audits this year, involving a supportive pre-emptive review during Quarter 3, followed by a follow up in Q4. The audit opinion would be issued at this point. There can be a degree of flexibility in the design of the first stage – its extent and formality of the report – depending on the needs of individual members and clients.

On the basis of feedback they have received, and seeking to recognise that the General Data Protection Regulation is now ‘business as usual’, NHS Digital have published a number of amendments and additions to the Toolkit for 2019-20. They have also announced that new guidance is being commissioned, at national level, to support the next round of DSPT audits.

If there are any messages or observations in this briefing that you wish to follow up, please contact your Audit Manager in the first instance.