

Healthcare -

The Edge and Virtualstock:

FAQs

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General Overview

Q: What is Virtualstock?

Virtualstock is a leading British software company that specialises in delivering Agile cloud-based technology to many of the UK's largest retailers, including Tesco, John Lewis, Maplin, Argos and Dixons Carphone. Since its inception in 2004, its flagship product, The Edge, has been successful in underpinning supply chain optimisation for the benefit of both retailers and suppliers, and has recently entered the healthcare market.

Q: What is The Edge?

The Edge is a game-changing Agile data platform. Built on open, scalable, secure technology that consumes, validates and exposes data in any format, it seamlessly unlocks business critical data, without the need for traditional systems integration. GS1/GDSN/PEPPOL compliant, The Edge delivers best-in-class eProcurement functionality, including an Amazon-style, Purchase-To-Pay online marketplace, inventory management, product information management (PIM) and catalogue management solution, as well as e-invoicing, track and trace, and analytics. The Edge delivers real-time interoperability and an exceptional user experience.

Q: Why is The Edge being adopted as the sole purchasing platform for all Trusts onboarding the system?

Working closely with NHS Trusts, Virtualstock rapidly delivers prolonged cost savings and efficiencies, while improving patient safety and quality of service. Built using Agile technology, The Edge delivers real-time interoperability and an exceptional user experience, and is GS1/GDSN/PEPPOL compliant.

The Virtualstock team is bringing retail best practice to the health sector and addresses the challenges set out in the 2015 Lord Carter report 'Operational productivity and performance in English NHS acute hospitals: Unwarranted variations', in which the use of the Virtualstock platform at Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation NHS Trust was cited as best practice.

Carter's report estimates that £5bn per year is lost in the NHS through waste and unwarranted price and product variation across acute Trusts. A sample of 22 Trusts exposed that they used 30,000 suppliers, 20,000 different product brands and more than 400,000 manufacturer products. Procurement-led efficiency initiatives specified by Lord Carter will aim to deliver savings of up to £1bn per annum (out of £5bn) by 2020. Lord Carter's report concluded that catalogue management, enabling control, compliance and reduced product and price variation, continues to be a serious issue for the NHS.

Suppliers wanting to sell products to NHS Trusts that have adopted The Edge, must also use it to enable both the Trust and the supplier to transact and operate efficiently.

Q: What are the benefits of using The Edge?

Using The Edge offers a multitude of benefits by streamlining the process of product catalogue and price management. The system increases efficiency, communication and the potential for commercial expansion, whilst reducing product orders/invoice discrepancies. Some of the key benefits include:

- **Reduced cost to serve**

- Easy to use catalogue induction process - suppliers can load their entire product catalogue for all Trusts, once, in one location and in one compliant format. Pricing, including contract and non-contract, can then be managed on a Trust-by-Trust basis.
- Use The Edge as a product information management (PIM) solution - all product data can be maintained in one place, enriched, exported and imported at any time.
- Effective communication - real-time messaging and notifications functionality improves productivity and facilitates timely authorisation without the need for meetings and phone calls.

- **Promotion**

- Display full product range - suppliers are encouraged to upload their entire product catalogue, as this could lead to the expansion of their business within the NHS, as the Trusts are able to view their full product range.
- Networking opportunities - suppliers can view buyers' activity and see which buyers have been looking at their products. Trusts that suppliers do not currently trade with, will be able to send a connection request asking to view their product range in more detail.

- **Easy Price Management**

- Flexible pricing - manage contract and non-contract pricing on a Trust-by-Trust basis.
- Ensure prices are up-to-date - buyers receive alerts when end dates on contract prices are due to expire to ensure that negotiations take place, and prices are kept up-to-date. If you wish to renew/update prices for a future date, these can be uploaded and will automatically replace the redundant prices upon their start date.
- Coordinated price authorisation - prices are authorised on one platform, which means that there are no pricing discrepancies between systems.
- Reduced invoice discrepancies - The Edge maintains suppliers' prices and manages the approval process with the Trusts, thereby significantly reducing price discrepancies and invoice disputes.
- GS1 compliant - The Edge is a GS1 certified product information management (PIM) solution and supports rich data content, such as product barcodes (GTINs) and images. Suppliers can also see their level of compliance to the Department of Health and GDSN data model standards.

Q: Which Trusts are using The Edge?

Currently, the Catalogue Management module has been implemented by:

- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust
- Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
- North Tees and Hartlepool Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust
- University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust
- Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The Purchase-To-Pay module will go live early 2018 with Guy's and St Thomas'. A number of other NHS Trusts, including those that fall under the Shelford Group heading, will be going live over the coming months.

NHS Shared Business Services (SBS), a Department of Health 50/50 joint venture with Sopra Steria, has also entered into a strategic partnership with Virtualstock. Some of England's largest hospitals have already agreed to use the platform and now NHS SBS has access to the system for the hundreds of healthcare organisations it represents across England.

SBS is the market leader in business support services for the NHS. It provides finance and accounting, employment and procurement services, delivering operational efficiencies and improved service quality, as well as real cost savings, of on average 30% for its NHS clients. SBS now provides financial services to 100% of all NHS Commissioning organisations and a range of business support services for around 50% of NHS Provider Trusts.

Q: How will I know when other Trusts are using The Edge?

Suppliers are kept informed of any new Trusts going live on The Edge. Once live, each respective Trust will appear as a 'Buyer' on the drop-down option on the 'Manage prices' page. Suppliers will then be able to import price files on a Trust-by-Trust basis.

Q: Is The Edge compliant with the Department of Health's (DoH) national standards?

Yes, The Edge is fully compliant with the DoH. It is also a certified GS1 product information management (PIM) solution and incorporates an integrated, certified PEPPOL Access Point.

Q: Is The Edge, the Department of Health's (DoH) system of choice?

DoH rarely shows bias towards one system over another, however The Edge is highlighted as 'best practice' in Lord Carter's 2015 report titled 'Operational productivity and performance in English NHS acute hospitals: unwarranted variations'.

Commercial

Q: What are the charges for using The Edge?

There is an annual subscription fee as well as a charge for the Purchase-To-Pay (P2P) solution:-

Catalogue

The subscription fee for catalogue management is £240 + VAT per year for 'Local' suppliers (suppliers who sell to 5 or fewer Trusts) and £2,400 + VAT per year for 'National' suppliers (suppliers who sell to more than 5 Trusts). This fee is payable when uploading the first price file. There is no limit to the number of products that can be included in the catalogue or price file.

P2P

The charge for Purchase-To-Pay transactions is 0.5%. This charge will only be imposed when a respective Trust places orders totalling £10,000 per month or over with a supplier.

Any suppliers processing less than £10,000 in orders in any given month with a respective Trust will not be charged a transaction fee for that month/Trust. This threshold level is based on the gross invoice amount (including VAT & delivery).

Suppliers will be invoiced one month in arrears for this fee. The fee is payable by credit card or bank transfer. For orders over £10,000 the transaction fee is invoiced 30 days after the end of the calendar month.

Q: Can I upgrade our account from the Local to National plan?

Yes, suppliers who are ready to sell to more than five Trusts, can upgrade by selecting the 'Upgrade your subscription' function on the 'Manage prices' page. Suppliers can pay via Credit Card or Bank Transfer. A credit note will then be issued for any outstanding months for an existing subscription.

Q: Do Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), selling UK-wide, pay the same as Multinational Corporations (MNCs)?

SMEs pay the same as MNCs for the annual subscription, however suppliers only pay Purchase-To-Pay charges when orders surpass £10,000 per respective Trust, per month. For orders of £10,000/month this equates to £50.

Q: Are there any charges for uploading the catalogue only?

There are no charges for uploading a catalogue only, and once published, the entire catalogue range will be visible to all Trusts. However, buyers cannot purchase products unless suppliers have loaded a price file for each respective Trust on the system.

Registration

Q: How do I register for The Edge?

Suppliers can register for The Edge by going to virtualstock.co.uk and clicking on the '[NHS Supplier Registration/Login](#)' button.

Q: Can suppliers have more than one registered user per company?

Yes, suppliers can have an unlimited number of registered users. Simply select 'Market' at the top of the page, select 'Users' from the drop-down list, click on the cog in the right hand corner (next to the 'Clear' and 'Search' buttons) and select 'Invite users'. Employees will then receive an email inviting them to register.

Q: What is the format I need to enter for the VAT number?

The VAT Number should be in the following example format: "GB999999973".

Q: What happens if I do not subscribe to The Edge?

Buyers from the respective Trusts adopting the platform will not be able to view or purchase products from suppliers who do not subscribe and load a catalogue on the system. Trusts may still be able to transact with these suppliers, however this will be based on a non-catalogue order, which is subject to manual checks. Any suppliers who do not wish to subscribe, will need to discuss this with their regular contacts at each one of the Trusts adopting the platform.

Q: What happens after registration?

The first registered supplier becomes the administrator and needs to be approved by Virtualstock before access to The Edge is provided. Subsequent users will then need to be invited/ approved by the admin.

Once a supplier user has been approved, a welcome email is sent containing a link to enable a username and set a password. This is available for a limited time only and will expire after one use. After setting a password, suppliers can upload their product data onto The Edge. Tutorials and video demos can be found using the 'Help' tab.

Suppliers are encouraged to upload rich product data with descriptions, image URLs and GTINs. Pricing can then be added on a Trust-by-Trust basis, once an annual subscription has been paid. This is accessible by clicking on 'Market', 'Manage Pricing'.

Q: Can I change the company name?

Yes, however you must be the administrator for the company. To do this, simply click your username in the top-right hand corner, select the 'My profile' tab, followed by 'Edit profile'.

Login

Q: Why does my login keep failing?

To login you need to enter the username and password you registered with. Both are case sensitive. If your login keeps failing you may need to reset your password.

Q: What is my username?

Your username is the email address you registered with. This is case sensitive.

Q: How can I retrieve my password?

If you have forgotten your password you can reset it by following the 'Forgot your password' link on The Edge login screen. A link to reset your password will be sent to your email address. You will need access to your email to reset your password.

Q: Do I have to use a specific browser to access The Edge?

The Edge is compatible with Firefox, Google Chrome, and Internet Explorer 11+. If you login with an unsupported browser, the layout and functionality may not be as expected.

Catalogue

Q: Why is there an annual subscription fee for The Edge?

The supplier-funded model provides access to thousands of buyers from the respective Trusts committed to using the sustainable, world-class eProcurement system, without putting any further financial strain on the NHS.

The Edge helps transform back-office functions, enhances communication and potential commercial expansions, as well as enabling the delivery of significant cost savings and efficiencies to both suppliers and Trusts.

Q: Can catalogue data be submitted via GDSN, rather than via The Edge?

Yes, however suppliers will be required to upload images and other rich data via The Edge, as these are not supported on GDSN.

Currently, suppliers have to export their data out of GDSN and import into The Edge. In the future, The Edge will have an automated connector.

Q: What's the timescale for Guy's and St Thomas' (GSTT) going live with catalogue management?

GSTT is currently live with catalogue management on The Edge, with most suppliers now having uploaded their finalised catalogue and pricing.

Q: Does The Edge support the Department of Health's (DoH) national strategy?

Subject to business case approval in 2017/18, the DoH plans to establish a central GDSN data-pool (PIM). This will require all NHS suppliers to upload their entire product catalogue to one common platform.

The Trusts fully support this initiative and see the adoption of The Edge (which a GS1 Certified PIM) as a key step in aligning to the national strategy.

However, as the scope of the national strategy is limited to product information only, Trusts and suppliers still need to manage local catalogue price files, which The Edge enables.

Q: What do these catalogue fields mean?

The terms and acronyms detailed on The Edge refer to various regulations and codes of practice, issued by professional organisations. These include:

- **Product Category/eClass:** Product Category is a way of organising a range of products based on their relatability into groups of similar products. eClass is a bespoke classification system for these 'groups' of products, owned by the NHS.
- **Product Name:** The short name of a product or service.
- **SKU:** Stock Keeping Unit, is often referred to as 'Product code'. This is a supplier's unique product identifier.
- **GTIN:** Global Trade Item Number is often referred to as 'barcode'. This is a unique number used to identify trade items, products or services. GTINs are 8 or 14 digits long.
- **OEM Part Number:** Original Equipment Manufacturer, refers to the company that originally built a given product. The OEM part number is often the same as the product SKU.
- **Brand:** Name given to the producer of products or services.
- **Lead Time:** The amount of time between purchase order and product dispatch.
- **COSHH:** Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. This relates to information about handling or using products.
- **WEEE:** Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive. This relates to information about disposal of products.
- **Electro Medical:** This is specific to how certain products are distributed. Affected suppliers will have codes/references for these products.
- **Image URLs:** Uniform Resource Locator refers to a 'web address' that identifies a particular file on the internet. When hosting product images online, suppliers must ensure that their servers are free to access i.e. not password protected. If suppliers are unable to host images, several commercial image providers are available for a monthly fee.
- **VAT Number:** Value Added Tax number is an identifier used for tax purposes. In the EU, a VAT identification number can be verified online at the EU's official website.

Q: What catalogue fields are mandatory?

The mandatory fields are **Category (eClass), Product Name, Product Code (SKU), OEM Part Number** and **Brand**.

Images and **GTINs** are not currently mandatory, but heavily requested by Trusts, as they provide buyers with a more informed purchasing decision and enhance supplier catalogues.

Q: What happens if all of the mandatory fields are not completed?

Suppliers will not be able to publish and make their products visible to Trust users, without completing the mandatory fields.

Completion of non-mandatory fields is also highly recommended as Trusts are more likely to purchase products if there is comprehensive, detailed product information present. The more enriched the data is, the higher products are placed within search results.

Q: What happens to existing catalogues when fields become newly mandatory?

Buyers will continue to have the ability to view goods and purchase from previously published catalogues, even when product fields become newly mandatory; however, if a supplier attempts to update their catalogue and add new product lines, enrich previously added content or republish their catalogue, they will not be able to, as they will be prompted to enter the newly mandatory fields.

Q: What happens if I don't have a GTIN?

Missing a GTIN will not prevent suppliers from publishing a catalogue, as it is currently a non-compulsory field. However, the Department of Health has mandated that all suppliers become GS1 compliant in order to continue trading with NHS acute Trusts. Compliance is required by 2019/20. There are several commercial entities that sell product barcodes.

Q: What is eClass and how do I tell what category my products fall into?

eClass is a bespoke classification system for products and services, owned by the English NHS. It is the supplier's responsibility to categorise products into the correct eClass. A full list of categories can be found on the NHS eClass searchable database.

If an error occurs during eClass mapping, suppliers can manually resolve this by selecting the number under 'Categories' (within the 'Manage catalogue' tab) and typing a keyword that relates to the respective products. Suggestions for the correct eClass will then be presented.

Q: Why are there different fields for eClass and product category?

eClass is a globally recognised classification system for products and services, owned by the English NHS. It is a means of cataloguing, or identifying products that can be grouped into categories based on an understanding of the essential properties and relationships between them.

Product category is a similar way of organising a range of products based on their relatability into groups of similar products. Suppliers may have already defined their product ranges into categories, however they will still need to be mapped to the NHS eClass system.

For example, nurses uniforms fall under the product category 'Staff clothing', which is then mapped to eClass, 'BAZ'.

Q: Is it a problem if my eClass codes are two characters, not three?

The Trust requires the correct three character eClass. The two characters specify a more generalised categorisation which is not sufficient for the Catalogue.

Suppliers with two-digit eClass categories should view the NHS eClass searchable database for a full list of eClass codes.

Q: Why hasn't my catalogue loaded?

If you have trouble uploading your catalogue, please check the following:

- The spreadsheet file type is .XLS or .XLXS.
- The first row is a header row with column headers to map to.
- The spreadsheet does not have any hidden rows or columns.
- If the spreadsheet has multiple tabs, the product data is in the first tab.
- Each respective mandatory field has a heading mapped, including Product Name, Product Code (SKU), Product eClass, OEM Part Number and Brand. All rows in these columns should have data and no blanks.

Q: Why are there errors on the 'Manage catalogue' page?

If a catalogue has been processed and errors are present, make sure that:

- All the eClass codes that have been loaded, including primary (mandatory) and secondary (non-mandatory) are recognised, three-digit acronyms.
- All product SKUs are unique.
- Lead Time and Minimum Order are numerical data only.
- All mandatory fields have been populated and there are no blanks.
- You have uploaded images (non-mandatory, but highly sought after by Trusts).
- You have uploaded GTINs (non-mandatory, but highly sought after by Trusts).

Q: Why are there products missing after the catalogue upload?

All product codes (SKUs) are unique and if there are any duplicates, the last row with that product code will overwrite any previous. Also, suppliers should ensure that they have mapped their columns to the correct headings in the product display template.

Q: What happens to products that do not have a unique SKU code?

Product codes are a unique identifier, assigned to each product which is ready for sale. Without a unique product code, suppliers will not be able to publish their products or list pricing against them. Products may still be ordered, but only as a bespoke product/service. This will need to be discussed with each respective Trust using The Edge.

Q: What is the difference between a SKU and GTIN?

The product SKU is a unique identifier for products available for purchase. GTIN is a global unique identifier. It is possible that your SKU is also used by another supplier, but the GTIN is truly unique. Some suppliers use the GTIN as their product code/SKU.

Q: When uploading a new catalogue, do I have to map the product fields again?

If the new catalogue has identical formatting to the previous file, the same mapping can be used again. Simply use the 'Copy mapping from an existing catalogue' option on the 'Product display template' page.

Q: Why do I need to map my product fields if the 'Sample data page' is accurate?

The 'Sample data page' is there to check that the file is formatted and the data is encoded correctly. If the sample page is mapped correctly, simply click 'next'.

Q: Why are there inconsistencies in the product field heading names?

Different entities refer to fields by different names, for example, 'product code' is also referred to as 'SKU'. The Edge has detailed what several headings mean on the 'Product display template' page. Suppliers can access these by hovering over the (?) symbols.

Q: Does The Edge provide pre-verification of FDA UDI submission data and submission monitoring/visibility to FDA acknowledgements?

No, currently Virtualstock does not have any pre-verification on this, however this will be a mapping option when The Edge is expanded to the USA.

Q: Why can't I use the same file name after deleting a catalogue?

The Edge retains file names, product data and mapping rules that were previously loaded to

the system. For this reason, suppliers cannot reuse the same catalogue name.

Q: When would I 'enrich' and when would I 'update' a file?

After uploading a catalogue, suppliers may have missed some mappings from the original spreadsheet. To add these fields to the mapping, you should use the 'update' function.

After mapping the original source file, you should use the 'enrich' function if you need to add missing data i.e. GTIN, or image URLs. This involves exporting a new Excel template, adding the missing data, and re-importing. Note that if you update your file AFTER you have enriched it, you may OVERWRITE the enriched data.

Q: Do I need to map a unique catalogue for each Trust?

No, suppliers only need to map one catalogue which can then be accessed by all Trusts on board the system. Once published, you can then add a unique pricing file for each respective Trust, including contract and non-contract pricing.

Q: How do I add new products to The Edge?

New products can be either loaded as a new catalogue, or added to an existing one. If you choose to add a new catalogue, you can use an existing mapping by selecting the 'Copy mapping from an existing catalogue' option on the 'Product display template' page.

You can also add new products to an existing catalogue by selecting the 'update' file function. Further step-by-step instructions can be found under the 'Help' tab on The Edge.

Q: What file format should my catalogue be in?

Files must be in either .XLS or .XLXS format.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of products I can load in a catalogue?

No, suppliers are encouraged to load their entire product range, not just their contract products, as The Edge will be used by thousands of buyers from the respective Trusts committed to using the system.

Q: How do I delete an existing catalogue?

If you are the supplier administrator you can delete a catalogue from the 'Manage catalogues' list. Simply select the cog at the end of the catalogue row and click 'delete'.

Q: How can I stop a Trust from seeing my products?

Once a product is published you cannot prevent a Trust from seeing it. You can prevent a Trust from buying the product by not loading a price for that Trust.

Q: How can I view my products from a Trust perspective?

You can view your products from a Trust perspective by following these steps:

- Log in to The Edge.
- Select 'Market' and 'Manage catalogues'.
- Select the 'Products' number (highlighted in pink) next to your catalogue.
- A view of the products within that respective catalogue is now visible.

Q: Previously we were using GHX Nexus for catalogue management. Will we end up with multiple systems for catalogue management for the NHS?

Trusts are free to use whichever catalogue management system they prefer but in each case, they will only be using one system. The Edge has been adopted by a growing number of Trusts, however, some Trusts are still using GHX or other systems.

If you are supplying to these Trusts then you will need to use more than one system. You should discuss this with your usual contacts at each of the respective Trusts.

Q: Can you use data within the GDSN system to populate The Edge?

In the future The Edge will support a connector to GDSN, however, for the time being you will need to export your data out of GDSN and manually import it into The Edge as a catalogue. Suppliers can then import pricing, including contract and non-contract to the system.

Also, GDSN does not currently support image URLs, so these will need to be hosted and added to The Edge, as Trust buyers are making images a high priority.

Q: What is the size limit for images displayed on The Edge?

The size limit for any image is 10MB.

Q: What are the correct measurements for images?

The ideal proportion would be landscape, 6x4 aspect ratio. The Edge will create a cached version of the source image and will resize for optimal display. The Edge will automatically refresh the image if the source image changes.

On the product catalogue listing page, the cached version of the source image is cropped to 196 px x 196 px. On the product detail page, the main image is resized to 393 px wide and will keep the aspect ratio of the source image's height.

Q: What is the correct format for my image URLs?

They should ideally be hosted as PNG or JPEG.

Pricing

Q: When can I load my price file?

Pricing can be imported and requested, once you have published your product catalogue data. To access the 'Manage prices' facility, suppliers will need to pay an annual subscription.

Q: Can other suppliers see my pricing?

No, other suppliers cannot see your pricing.

Q: Can Trusts on The Edge see my contract prices with other Trusts?

No, pricing is only visible between the respective Trust and their supplier.

Q: How will a Trust know that my item is a contract price?

Contract prices appear next to products with a green tick.

Q: Who regulates and confirms my contract pricing?

Suppliers are responsible for their own price files. Any goods with an agreed contract price, should have a contract reference and start and end dates. These will then need to be 'requested' by the supplier, and approved by the buyers at the respective Trust. Any prices that are non-contract, will go live immediately and do not require approval.

If a contract price is in dispute, the Trust can reject a singular line item without affecting any other products. There is the opportunity to add notes against the line item in question enabling you to have a recorded dialogue with the Trust to resolve any pricing disputes.

Q: What happens when a contract price expires?

If a contract end date expires, the pricing stays but the product will no longer be on contract for buyers from the Trust.

Q: How long does it take for contract pricing to be reviewed by the Trusts?

Notifications for Trust buyers are currently defaulted to 3 hours after pricing has first been 'requested', followed by a reminder after 3 days, followed by an escalation to a senior employee after 5 days. This process is dependent on the number of requested product lines.

Q: Will I be notified when my contract prices have been approved or rejected?

Suppliers only receive notifications when contract prices have been rejected, not approved.

Q: Will I receive notifications prior to my contract prices expiring?

This facility is currently being developed and tailored for supplier users and will be available after go-live. Suppliers with contracts near expiry will be contacted by their regular contact.

Price alerts are currently defaulted for Trusts at 3 months prior to expiry, followed by a reminder at 2 months, followed by an escalation at 1 month, followed by a further escalation at 2 weeks. Notifications and reminders go to all Trust buyers, however escalations only go to users with 'receive escalations' permissions.

Q: Does this mean I can have products in the list twice, one for current and one for future prices?

You cannot list a product twice with two prices (unless the products are listed under two different product SKUs), but you can have the existing list price and the contract price start date in the future. The future price will start on that contract start date. The old price will, at that time, be overwritten.

Q: How can I remove an item from sale?

To remove a product from sale you need to update your price file with a blank price value. Do not put the digit zero, this will mean your product is for sale at £0.

Q: Can I have one price file for multiple Trusts?

Pricing can be the same across multiple Trusts, but suppliers will need to load a separate price file for each one respectively.

Q: What happens if I cannot upload contract pricing/all my prices are in error?

This is likely due to your supplier profile not being set up as a 'Contract' supplier. You will need to ask your usual Trust contact to enable you in their 'Admin' settings. Once this is resolved, you can clear all errors and reload your pricing spreadsheet, which should upload properly as you're now flagged as a contract supplier.

Q: What do I do if we have tiered pricing?

Any suppliers with tiered pricing, will have the ability to add a band 'quantity'. The number entered as the band quantity is the minimum number that must be ordered to qualify for the corresponding price. This price is valid for this quantity and above, until the next band quantity is defined. The band price is given per item.

Q: How do I specify my delivery costs and timescales?

Suppliers can use the 'Delivery options' tab, found in the 'Manage prices' page. Options can be clearly identified per Trust, by selecting each respective buyer on the drop-down option.

Purchase-to-Pay

Q: What is Purchase-To-Pay (P2P) and how does it work?

Purchase-To-Pay refers to the processes that underpin the end-to-end activities of requesting, purchasing and receiving goods and services. Shaped by the drive towards the 'perfect order' in retail, where the 'Amazon effect' has forced the industry to design-out inefficiencies in the order process, The Edge offers enhanced visibility, returns, cancellations and full track and trace capability that will dramatically reduce costs.

As well as order visibility, the P2P module offers internal receipting and e-invoicing, allowing The Edge to 3-way match the purchase order, receipt and invoice. This offers huge benefits to both Trusts and suppliers, reducing administrative costs and speeding up payments. Having the pricing and invoicing stored in one system with full audit history will largely eradicate all discrepancies.

Q: Are Trusts planning on going live with the full Purchase-to-Pay (P2P) functionality straight away?

There will be a staggered rollout, generally starting with catalogue and moving to P2P following this. Guy's and St Thomas' is the first Trust to go-live in early 2018, with other Trusts falling in closely behind this.

Q: What is the process for Trusts when placing orders?

Trusts have access to a marketplace, with a familiar online shopping experience, where they can select a product, add to cart and click-to-purchase.

Q: When a Trust places an order on The Edge, how does this come through?

The Edge is a web-based service, which means that it can be accessed anywhere providing you have an internet connection. When an order is placed, suppliers will receive a notification within the inbox on The Edge and via email.

An electronic purchase order will be generated, which can be used to notify the Trust that the goods have been dispatched. The purchase order can then be 'flipped' or converted into an invoice, radically speeding up the receipting and payment of goods and invoices. Upon receipt of the goods, the invoices are 3-way matched and posted for payment, speeding up payment to suppliers and reducing invoice discrepancies.

Q: Does Virtualstock charge a transaction fee for orders placed by the Trusts?

The charge for Purchase-To-Pay transactions is 0.5%. This charge will only be imposed when an individual Trust places orders totalling £10,000 per month or over, with a supplier.

Any supplier processing less than £10,000 in orders in any given month with an individual Trust will not be charged a transaction fee for that month/Trust. This threshold level is based

on the gross invoice amount, including VAT & delivery.

Q: Will suppliers invariably add the 0.5% onto their price to the NHS?

This is dependent on each supplier and the respective Trusts they transact with. This should be discussed with your regular Trust contact.

Q: How are Purchase-to-Pay transaction fees validated and invoiced?

The Edge keeps a record of all transactions. Through 3-way matching of a supplier's invoice, the transactions are confirmed and raised a month in arrears for those suppliers that surpass £10,000 per individual Trust, per month.

Q: Can Virtualstock guarantee that the Purchase-to-Pay (P2P) fee will not be changed and increased in the future?

Virtualstock cannot guarantee that the P2P transaction fee will not change (either increased or decreased), however, our strategy is to develop and deliver value for money, which is reflected in the overall charging level.

Q: Are supplier fees a barrier to trade with the NHS?

Using The Edge helps transform back-office functions, enhances communication and potential commercial expansion, as well as enabling the delivery of significant cost savings and efficiencies to both suppliers and Trusts. The supplier-funded model ensures that both suppliers and Trusts, will continue to have access to a world-class eProcurement system.

The Edge is used by many of the UK's largest retailers, including Tesco, John Lewis, Maplin, Argos and Dixons Carphone. It brings retail best practice to the NHS and is easy to implement and adopt. It is fully compliant with GS1 and PEPPOL eCommerce standards.

Q: Why is the model supplier-funded?

The Edge was identified by Lord Carter in his 2015 report 'Operational productivity and performance in English NHS acute hospitals: unwarranted variations', as having the versatility to be used sector-wide for NHS eProcurement, bringing a wealth of benefits to both Trusts and suppliers.

The supplier funded model provides all Trusts using The Edge, with a world-class eProcurement system without putting any further financial strain on the NHS, whilst enabling the delivery of significant cost savings and efficiencies to both suppliers and Trusts.

Q: Are larger suppliers funding the system for smaller suppliers?

Purchase-To-Pay charges are a reflection of transaction activity and usage of the system, not the size of each respective supplier.

Q: How is the Edge connected with Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)?

The Edge has EDI connections to GHX, NHS Supply Chain and PEPPOL.

As more suppliers and Trusts are onboarded to The Edge, we will be building a generic Application Programming Interface for suppliers to connect to.

Q: Are suppliers notified when the Terms and Conditions for The Edge are updated?

Yes, all registered users on The Edge are notified of any changes to Terms and Conditions.

Q: Is there any further training available on the Purchase-to-Pay system?

There are guidance notes by user journey with accompanying how-to videos accessible on The Edge.

Q: How will the new Future Operating Model (FOM) affect the Purchase-To-Pay process (P2P)?

Virtualstock sees the P2P processes as intrinsic to the FOM.

Q: Are there plans to share suppliers' pricing with the Department of Health (DoH) in the future?

No, there are no plans to share pricing with the DoH.

Q: What level of service desk support is available for suppliers?

First level support will be provided by your usual primary Trust contact. Virtualstock will then support each respective Trust with second and third level support thereafter.

Q: What are the service desk Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)?

In the first instance, issues should be raised directly with your regular Trust contact. If escalated to second line support at Virtualstock, the standard service desk KPIs are:

- Priority 1 - Response within 15 minutes
- Priority 2 - Response within 30 minutes
- Priority 3 - Response within 1 hour
- Priority 4 - Response within 4 hours

GS1 and PEPPOL

Q: What is PEPPOL?

Pan-European Public Procurement On-Line (PEPPOL) is an EDI (electronic data interchange) protocol, which aims to simplify the Purchase-To-Pay process between government bodies and private companies.

In simple terms, PEPPOL is a standardised network for exchanging electronic trading documents over a European-wide network, including purchase orders and invoices. These technologies automate information exchange across the supply chain, reducing the cost and potential risk of error from manual intervention.

Q: What is a PEPPOL Access Point?

PEPPOL Access Points deliver users with a compliant route to procure products. The ‘four corner’ model, on which PEPPOL is based, enables Trusts and suppliers to choose their own Access Point; these will then transact with one-another. There is no need for Trusts and suppliers to use the same one. Customers and suppliers can choose whichever certified PEPPOL Access Point they wish.

Q: Why do I need to use a PEPPOL Access Point?

Across the UK public sector, it is estimated that more than 50% of purchase orders are sent to suppliers as PDFs that require manual keying into a supplier’s sales order processing system. Without any automation or standardisation of this process, a single supplier wishing to trade with the UK public sector may have to accept hundreds of different formats of purchase orders.

The Department of Health committed to the use of PEPPOL Access Points in its NHS eProcurement Strategy in May 2014. The use of PEPPOL by NHS Trusts is part of the Department of Health’s ongoing investment in technology solutions, making the NHS easier for suppliers to do business with.

Q: We have been informed recently of the PEPPOL requirements in France via Chorus. Is this something that Virtualstock can support us with?

Currently we are focused on the UK, but will be addressing the European market in the near future.

Q: What is GS1?

GS1 is an international, not-for-profit organisation that designs and implements global standards for use in the supply chain. It sets standards for identifying, capturing and sharing information about products, assets, services, people, locations and more.

These standards make it possible for companies and healthcare providers to speak the same language, connect with each other and, more importantly in healthcare, deliver improved patient safety, regulatory compliance and operational efficiencies. The GS1 barcode, often referred to as GTIN (Global Trade Item Number), is the most well-known and universally recognisable standard that GS1 produces.

Q: Why do I need to be GS1 compliant?

Any suppliers working with NHS Acute Trusts in England must become GS1 compliant if they wish to continue providing them with any service or product. This was mandated by the Department of Health in its eProcurement Strategy in 2014. The deadline for compliance is 2019/20.

Q: Are the attributes in The Edge, 100% compliant with GS1?

Yes, all product attributes, including validation rules, are loaded on the system. These will be amended in the future, if GS1 releases additional fields.

Q: Is The Edge a GS1 certified data-pool?

Virtualstock is not a GS1 data-pool, it is a certified Product Information Management (PIM) solution. This can be verified by GS1 – please contact: jonathan.brown@gs1uk.org

Q: If the NHS set up a central data-pool of their own, will we be able to transfer our data straight from The Edge?

Yes, you can use The Edge as a Product Information Management (PIM) solution, to store all data in one place and extract in the format needed.

Q: Other GDSN providers have mentioned that their data-pools have the facility for us to upload data, which can then be transferred to the US GUDID to meet FDA UDI requirements. Is there any option to do this with The Edge?

Yes, we can load the data structure of the US GUDID and enable the output to this system.

If you have any questions that have not been answered in this FAQ document, please contact Virtualstock directly using the email or telephone number below.

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