



23 June 2024

Urgent Notice: Security Breach Impacting NHLS IT Systems

Dear NHLS Stakeholder,

I am writing to alert you of a recent security breach involving the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) IT systems. We had a security breach (midnight Friday 21 June,) that affected our data centres caused by a ransomware virus. This attack affected our virtual servers and data storage, rendering them inaccessible and some deleted including the backup data. However, our Enterprise Resource Planning (Oracle) environment and Laboratory Information System (Trakcare) database are not affected.

This has had an impact on our service delivery because we operate a networked laboratory system that relies significantly on information technology. As a result of this breach, most of our services have experienced temporary downtime. We are now investigating the entire scope of the effect, but we want you to know that we are prioritising the restoration of all vital services.

We have activated our Incident Response Team, which consists of internal experts and external cybersecurity professionals. We are conducting a comprehensive investigation to determine the entire extent of the compromise.

We recognise the magnitude of the situation and the concerns it may generate. Please know that our main focus is the security and integrity of our data and services. We will provide regular updates on the situation and our work towards resolving the issue. We are making all necessary efforts to prevent future incidents and increase our cybersecurity posture.

We have therefore resorted to manually processing of all the diagnostic samples received by our laboratories. Results will be communicated telephonically if urgent and the rest will be manually printed and distributed to healthcare facilities and clinicians.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we navigate this difficult circumstance. We appreciate your trust and are committed to restoring full service as soon and safely as feasible.

Regards,

Prof Koleka Mlisana

NHLS Chief Executive Officer