

15 May 2017

To: Foundation/ NHS Trust Chief Executives
Accountable Officers of CCGs

Dear Colleague,

NHS e-Referral Service: Paper Switch-Off Programme

I am writing to you about an important national programme of work to deliver the NHS e-Referrals Service (e-RS).

The e-RS Paper Switch-off Programme has been developed to support Trusts and CCGs to move to full use of e-RS for all consultant-led first outpatient appointments. The programme will help Trusts meet the conditions of the NHS Standard Contract where, from 1 October 2018, providers:

“need not accept (and will not be paid for any Activity resulting from) Referrals by GPs to Consultant-led acute outpatient Services made other than through the NHS e-Referral Service.”¹

The programme will also help Trusts meet the requirements of the national CQUIN target for e-RS in 2017/18.

Adopting full use of e-RS is key element in the move to a paperless NHS and has the support of NHS England and NHS Improvement. The benefits of using e-RS are immediate for patients being referred through the service and for Trusts. Patients have more choice and control over their healthcare and Trusts benefit through reducing ‘did not attend’ (DNA) rates and improving administrative efficiencies. A National Audit Office report into NHS waiting times for elective care in England² published in 2014 showed that Trusts reduced DNA rates by 50% on average by using e-RS. Furthermore, moving to full adoption of the service will open up future opportunities for elective care innovation and transformation using the e-RS platform.

A national programme has been established to oversee the successful delivery of e-RS paper switch-off by October 2018. This programme will be delivered through collaboration between NHS England, NHS Digital and NHS Improvement working in conjunction with Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). The aim of the programme will be to deliver paper switch-off across England in a phased way from now until October 2018. This will be achieved by delivering a series of ‘switch-off’ projects organised around individual Trusts and their main referring CCGs.

¹ Page 9 SC6.2A NHS STANDARD CONTRACT 2017/18 and 2018/19 SERVICE CONDITIONS (Full Length)

² <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/NHS-waiting-times-for-elective-care-in-England.pdf>

A small cohort of 'pioneer' Trusts have started work on the programme in order to test the conditions and processes for switching off paper. This learning, with supporting project tools and infrastructure, will then be rolled out across all providers.

In parallel, the regional e-RS programme team will contact Trusts and CCGs over the coming weeks to undertake initial engagement activities, establish a baseline position for each Trust and agree timescales for taking part in the programme.

As part of the programme, Trusts will receive dedicated e-RS subject matter support, expertise, materials and access to wider learning from the programme team. In return, Trusts will be asked to provide executive level sponsorship and project management resource. Trusts will also be asked to work with the regional e-RS programme team to schedule their implementation within a regional pipeline of paper switch-off to ensure all Trusts are adequately supported through the process and avoid clustering Trusts towards the end of the programme.

Local projects will include contracting CCGs to ensure projects are delivered as part of a wider health economy and aligned with Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STP).

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the overall plans for the NHS e-Referral Service and of our intention to contact all Trusts shortly to start initial discussions, commence programme activities and agree timescales for implementation. Included in Appendix A is a list of required actions by Trust and CCG.

If you would like more information or support to initiate a local e-RS project please contact your NHS England Regional e-RS lead whose details are appended to this letter in Appendix B.

I hope I can count on your support for this important national programme.

Yours sincerely



Lyn Simpson
Executive Regional Managing Director (North)
NHS Improvement



Richard Barker
Regional Director (North)
NHS England

cc: Janet King, Head of Information Transparency, NHS England
Tony Baldasera, Regional Chief Operating Officer (North), NHS Improvement
Carol Stubley, Regional Director of Assurance and Delivery (North), NHS England
Directors of Commissioning Operations (North)
Directors of Improvement and Delivery (North)

Appendix A: Actions for Trusts and CCGS

Trust Actions:

- 1) Undertake a readiness assessment for adopting the NHS e-Referral Service across all consultant led 1st outpatient appointments.
- 2) Allocate an Executive Director to be accountable to the Trust Board for delivery of full use of e-RS ahead of October 2018 and in line with project timescales set by your organisation in collaboration with the regional e-RS team.
- 3) Work in conjunction with the regional programme team to plan, schedule and deliver the required activities in agreed timescales.

CCG Actions:

- 1) Support Trusts in preparation, planning and implementation activities required to comply with the NHS Standard Contract by October 2018.
- 2) Take responsibility for working with your GP practices to support the necessary changes.
- 3) Define and cascade communications to GP practices in relation to the programme and standard operating procedures relating to the use of e-RS.
- 4) Ensure e-RS use and its potential for transformation is understood and considered in STP planning.
- 5) Ensure compliance with the NHS Standard Contract term for exclusive use of e-RS for consultant-led first outpatient appointments from 1 October 2018.

Appendix B: Contact details for NHS England e-RS Leads

Name	Title	Email	Telephone
NORTH			
Janet King	Regional Digital Director	janet.king16@nhs.net	0113 8251956
Daniel Hallen	Head of Digital Technology	daniel.hallen@nhs.net	07714773654
MIDLANDS & EAST			
Paul Fleming	Regional Head - Digital Technology	paulfleming@nhs.net	07876869451
SOUTH			
Cathy Francis	Regional Digital Director	cathyfrancis@nhs.net	07956410068
Ursa Alad	Digital Technology Programme Manager	ursa.alad@nhs.net	07730379239
LONDON			
Jane Barnacle	Regional Digital Director	j.barnacle@nhs.net	0113 8070302
Laic Khalique	Head of Digital Technology	laic.khalique@nhs.net	07730371080
NATIONAL			
Stephen Firman	SRO NHS e-Referral Service	stephenfirman@nhs.net	07710 152320