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**NHS e-Referral Service**

**Frequently Asked Questions for Primary Care Clinicians**

**How do I refer and book our patient’s appointments?**

The process is surprisingly simple and intuitive. Search for a patient, set the type of referral and search for services, add additional requirements if necessary, pick the service you require, check the Review Referral Criteria, Search for, or Request an appointment, upload a referral letter, and book.

**Why should I cooperate? Our practice has been running just fine. We don’t have any problems.**

You don’t need to have any problems to fix in order to realise the benefits of using the e-Referral Service. eRS is about primary and secondary care service redesign to improve the patient experience.

**What is a UBRN?**

A Unique Booking Reference Number (UBRN is an automatically generated reference which is allocated by e-RS at the first attempt to create a Referral. This reference is used by e-RS to manage the Referral process, track changes and communicate appointment status when required.

**What if I am unsure which clinic to refer to?**

Use the filter criteria to narrow your search as much as possible when searching for services. If you are still presented with too many options you can use a clinical terms search. Every e-Referral Service has a description with Service Specific Booking Guidance. Referral criteria, conditions treated, procedures performed, age range treated, etc. which you can review to ensure that you are referring your patient to the most appropriate clinic.

**What if I have questions about a particular process? Is there someone I can call regarding local NHS e-Referral Service policies or procedures?**

**What is the best way to search for hospital services in eRS?**

There is no right or wrong way to search for services offered in eRS. Searching for services by either specialty & clinic type, by named clinician, organisation, or by using a clinical term are the minimum search criteria. However you can combine these filters to further narrow down the search results.

**How come the hospital is calling and requesting a referral letter be faxed to them when I can clearly see the referral letter attached to the appointment request?**

The most likely reason this is happening is because when the referral was submitted to the Trust there were no appointments available and your practice had to defer the appointment request. The hospital can see your appointment request but not the referral that you uploaded. Because they could not offer your patient an appointment at the time of your referral, the Trust does not yet have a legitimate relationship with your patient and is not privy to the confidential information provided within the referral letter. This is really down to the hospital’s local processes on how they handle this.

**Why else would an administrator be calling for a referral letter?**

The only other reason this would happen would be in an instance where a practice failed to attach a referral letter to the patient’s appointment request. It is not mandatory to attach a referral letter at the time of booking. Best practice for referrers is to attach a 2WW referral within one working dayhours and a Routine referral within

**Why is the e-Referral Service running so slow?**

Slow performance may be caused by a local or national issue that your practice has no control over. All live service information can be viewed on the NHS Digital NHS e-Referral Service website.

Another reason for slow performance could be that your practice PCs do not meet the minimum performance specifications for the NHS e-Referral Service application. The requirements can be referenced on the NHS e-Referral Service website as well.

**What happens when I get the message, “No slots available” when searching for appointments? Can I still refer into the service?**

Yes. You can submit your referral and defer the booking to the provider when they cannot offer you any appointments for the service that you are referring into. Depending on the hospital’s own policies regarding this, you may expect to get a call from an administrator asking for you to send them the referral even though you have already attached it to your deferred appointment request.

**I see that eRS has an Advice & Guidance function. Can I use eRS for A&G?**

While referrers can use eRS for Advice and Guidance it would be best to follow standard practices set out by your CCG. Wandsworth and Merton are using Kinesis for A&G currently and should continue to do so until further notice to reduce the risk of your A&G request being overlooked.

**Why is a patient is receiving letters from the e-Referral Service in a language that they do not understand?**

The NHS e-Referral Service uses additional data about patients which includes the patient’s preferred language. Sometimes this can be incorrectly set to a language that the patient is unfamiliar with. This can cause organisations to send reminder letters to patients in the wrong language. Referrers can find the patient on eRS and open the Update Person screen by clicking the button of the same name on the Patient tab. Update the Preferred Language value as required and save if this issue is occurring.

**Do I have to book my patient’s appointment while they are in my presence?**

That really depends on your patient’s circumstances. If the referral is Urgent or 2WW, or where you feel that the patient may need assistance in booking their appointment a referrer should refer and book in the presence of the patient. Otherwise, referrers can provide the patient with an Appointment Request letter and password to allow them to make the booking at their convenience (either on the telephone, via the internet or facilitated by a member of the referring practice staff).

**Can I attach a photo or any other file to my referral?**

Referrers can attach just about any file type to an e-Referral. A complete list of acceptable file types can be found within the eRS Help System under “Adding Attachments”. Typically you can also add links to other external resources into a text field associated with an attachment.

**What is the maximum file size for attachments to an e-referral?**

The maximum total file size for attachments to an e-referral is 5 mb. This can comprise of one large file size or several smaller ones.

**Why would my referral be rejected by a hospital?**

The best way to find out would be to look up the UBRN History for the referral. Any action associated with an appointment request is annotated. Providers are required to select a reason for rejection and have the opportunity to provide a free text explanation to any action within eRS. Adding comments is best practice, but it may not be policy at some hospitals. If there are no provider comments to a rejection and you want to know why you will have to contact the hospital. Provider contact information can be found within every service description on the e-Referral Service.

**How do I find a highly specialised clinic without having to search through hundreds of services?**

Usually a highly specialised service can be identified easily by the name that the service provider gives and a basic search using Specialty and Clinic Type will be sufficient. However, referrers can utilise the clinical term search when searching for available services to really seek out services relating to a specific condition or procedure. The clinical terms search makes use of SNOMED terms and service providers associate these clinical terms with each service that they publish.

**Can I refer to a specific consultant?**

Yes. When searching for services a Named Clinician filter is available. When using this filter your search will only return services with the clinician that you have selected. Bear in mind that this can have an impact on the time it takes for your patient to be seen in hospital.

**My patients are worried about protecting their confidentiality. What am I supposed to tell them?**

Patient confidentiality is taken very seriously. The NHS e-Referral Service incorporates several different methods of protecting a patient’s data to ensure confidentiality and safety. These include data encryption for sending and receiving information, Smartcard access and the need for a password. The Smartcard contains a digital certificate, which is checked against the NHS staff database, and authenticates the user. Only then can a user gain access to the NHS e-Referral Service.

Other security measures include restricting access to information so that only those with a genuine (legitimate) care relationship with the patient will be able to view the information they need, based on their role. NHS staff are bound by a duty of confidentiality, both in Common Law and by the Data Protection Act (1998).

Patients are only able to book/change appointments using a unique booking reference number and a password.

Further details about information security within the NHS e-Referral Service application are available on the NHS e-Referral Service website.

**I have some weird system message on my screen. What does it mean?**

A table of all e-Referral Service system messages and their descriptions can be found within the reference guide for found in the eRS Help System when logged in.

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