**PIN for Dental Digital Referral Solution for the South West Region**

**Introduction**

The Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in the South West region, are seeking to commission and implement a digital solution for end-to-end dental referrals across the South West, and would like to determine the level of market interest in the provision of these services.

Currently, six of the seven ICBs in the region have approved the strategic direction of moving towards a digital dental referral solution in the South West.

This document outlines information which may form part of a specification at a later date. The Commissioners are looking to hear from providers who believe they would be able to provide the services described.

**Current Context**

*Referral Process*

If a dental clinician wants to send a referral from and/or between primary, secondary and community dental in the South West\*, they must:

\*One ICB in the South West already has a dental digital referral solution as part of a prior arrangement with the South East region, so does not follow the above process

*Existing Issues*

The existing referral pathways create failure demand and delays in triaging referrals and providing assessment and treatment to patients in the following ways:

* The difficulty in clinicians finding and using the right form
* The difficulty in clinicians sending the right form to the right place
* The different methods of accepting, triaging and logging the referral at the receiving organisation
* The potential loss of detail in the referral from scanning in typed or handwritten forms
* The potential loss of clinical digital imaging quality from scanning in additional clinical images and information
* Delays in accepting referrals or declining treatment if there is information missing from the referral form
* Unknown referral to treatment timescales
* Lack of information on number and types of referrals, by referrer etc.
* Lack of supply and demand information on referrals and treatment requests
* In some cases, acceptance of patients for care that should be managed in Primary Care

Therefore, the Commissioners are seeking to determine the level of market interest in the provision of a digital referral solution which must be able to mitigate these issues.

*Referral Forms and Pathways*

Significant work has already been carried out by NHSE, the Managed Clinical Networks and service providers within the region to update and improve the existing referrals forms, so these should be ready for digitisation.

*Support*

There is strong clinical support for the implementation of a dental digital referrals solution for the region.

*Providers*

There are approximately 640 NHS primary care dental providers across the region, with a further nine community providers and approximately 15 secondary care providers.

**Aims of the Service**

The service will improve the dental referral pathway by:

* Providing clinicians with a single way of making referrals to primary, secondary or community dental services
* Improving the quality of referrals in order to support effective triage and treatment provision
* Enabling patients to access dental care in a timely manner
* Improving overall efficiency of the referral process
* Providing accurate referral information to support clinical service evaluation, and future commissioning and development
* Achieving ongoing value for money

**Benefits of the Service**

In meeting the above aims, the service will also provide the following benefits for patients, clinicians, providers/users and commissioners:

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| --- | --- |
| Group | Benefits |
| Patients | * Improved patient confidence and certainty
* Improved patient choice
* Reduced waiting time for first appointment, and a reduction in the overall treatment time
* Access to appropriate clinical tiers and services appropriate to needs
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| Referring Clinicians | * Improved confidence in the referral process
* Improved referral management
* Improved patient safety
* Interactive feedback with providers
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| Providers | * Effective and consistent referral and patient management
* Reduced administrative overheads
* Improved patient safety
* Improved integration with hospital clinical systems
* Improved integration with primary care clinical systems
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| Commissioners | * Improved reporting and management information
* Improved referral management
* More effective and efficient commissioning decision making
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**Objectives of the Service**

Closely linked to the aims and benefits, the service must also meet the following objectives:

* Support referrals across all provider types, including private dental providers who wish to refer into NHS provision, and onward referrals, such as from a hospital to a community service, or vice versa
* Reduce the number of inappropriate referrals or referrals with missing information
* Help with identifying areas of training/educational need and facilitating a feedback loop to clinicians to support them making future referrals
* Improve levels of patient and clinical confidence and satisfaction with the referral process
* Provide information which can inform patient choice (e.g. distances and waiting times)
* Allow digital clinical images to be sent with referrals, in a way which is secure
* Track all referrals to ensure no unnecessary delays
* Provide providers and commissioners with live information (via a dashboard, for example) of the status of all referrals

**Additional Service Details**

In addition to the information listed in the aims, benefits and objectives, the service must also:

* Be an end-to-end digital solution
* Link seamlessly with existing systems used in all provider types, for ease of use
* Be useable by non-dental professionals, such as SEND and LAC staff who may need to refer into dental services

**Potential Implementation**

As part of the potential implementation of any digital solution for dental referrals, the provider of the service must also:

* Be able to project manage the day-to-day liaison and technical discussions with all providers, and ongoing interactions with NHSE and relevant ICBs
* Be able to manage a potential staged roll out across the region, with different ICBs or specialisms coming ‘on-line’ at different times – this includes a potential ‘vanguard’ pilot ICB area who may wish to proceed at a quicker pace than others
* Be able to provide training sessions and guides for providers and commissioners
* Be able to provide technical assistance to users during working hours – this would then be an ongoing requirement throughout the duration of any contract
* Be able to provide live and ad hoc reports from the system for commissioners and other relevant stakeholders – this would then be an ongoing requirement throughout the duration of any contract
* Ensure that data backups are taken regularly, and all data is kept secure and in accordance with UK data and information governance legislation – this would then be an ongoing requirement throughout the duration of any contract