

1 August 2023

Implementation of Epic at Guy's and St Thomas' and King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trusts as part of the Apollo programme

Information for GPs, and GP practices

On 5 October 2023, Guy's and St Thomas' and King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trusts are jointly introducing a new electronic health record (EHR) system.

The new system, powered by Epic as part of the Apollo programme, will replace multiple clinical systems in use across both Trusts with a single, integrated and comprehensive electronic health record. It will also improve the consistency and timeliness of information being provided to GPs.

On 5 October, Synnovis – which provides pathology services for both Trusts - is replacing its laboratory information system with Epic. As part of this, we will standardise the way requests for pathology and radiology are made across South East London. This will start with radiology requests in October 2023, followed by pathology in the first half of 2024.

What does the launch of Epic mean for GPs?

We are confident that Epic will bring about major long-term benefits for patients, hospital staff and GPs, and help transform many of the ways in which we provide and deliver care.

However, we also recognise that the introduction of Epic represents a significant change for both Trusts, plus key stakeholders we work with (including GPs), and there is also likely to be some disruption to services in the days surrounding the launch of the system, and in the pre- and post-launch period.

The purpose of this briefing document is to provide you with a brief overview of the steps we are taking to minimise disruption to you and your colleagues, and to answer questions we anticipate GPs and GP practices will have ahead of launch.

This is the first of regular communications with GPs ahead of the launch of Epic, and further information – including the first of a new, regular e-bulletin and the opportunity to attend drop-in sessions – will be shared in due course.

What will change as a result of Epic?

- **The information sent to the London Care Record will improve, so giving GPs a better view of what is happening to patients at both Trusts**
- Both Trusts will continue to submit letters, discharge summaries and test results to the London Care Record. The same documents will continue to be

sent direct to GP practices as well. GPs will also be able to see contemporaneous updates for inpatients and outpatients in the London Care Record.

- **Documents and communication will be easier to read, and more timely**
 - Documentation from both Trusts will look different once Epic goes live. In particular, letters will highlight key changes and any actions for GPs; and these improvements to the format of letters have been made in consultation with GP colleagues. Examples of what the new letters will look like will be shared with GPs in the coming weeks, and ahead of go-live on 5 October.
 - Both Guy's and St Thomas' and King's plan to produce their patient clinic letters as close to real-time as they can be generated in clinic, using voice recognition software.
- **Better tracking of letter transmission**
 - At present, both Trusts send letters to GPs via NHSMail, which doesn't enable GPs or either Trust to effectively track transmission and receipt of letters once they have been issued. From 1 July 2023, the tracking functionality of NHS Mail was further deprecated nationally, and Trusts and GP practices have been encouraged to move to MESH transmission.
 - The launch of Epic gives us a superb opportunity to do this in a better and more streamlined way. However, we fully appreciate our original plan to send letters to GPs via MESH prompted some concerns – which is why we now plan to send letters to GPs via Docman Connect as an interim step, before we move to full end-to-end MESH transmission.
 - DocMan Connect is already used effectively by clinicians at Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust – so we are confident it will be a good solution for Guy's and St Thomas' and King's.
 - From 5 October, GP practices already using DocMan will receive letters from the Trust into their DocMan, and practices using MESH will receive letters via MESH. We appreciate, however, that we are introducing the DocMan Connect solution very close to our Epic go-live date and so there is a risk that we will not have everything in place for every GP practice in the remaining available time.
 - We are working closely with GP leadership teams across SEL to ensure that everything is in place ready for 5 October, as well as developing a Plan B in the event that we run out of time, or there is a failure of the solution when tested.

- **Radiology requests**

- Radiology requests will be made using ICE. This is not part of the Epic programme, but a concurrent project in South East London.
- ICE is an order communications system that links GP practices with hospital Trusts. It is accessed by a link in EMIS, and – to ensure ease of use – it opens with the patients’ demographics and requestor information already populated.
- When a request for a radiology exam (X-Ray, Ultrasound, CT or MRI) is made in ICE, it immediately appears in the Trust’s radiology system as an order. ICE will also enable the radiology clinical report to be viewed and saved at the GP practice via EMIS.

- **After Visit Summary (AVS)**

- Patients will receive an AVS after both hospital outpatient visits and inpatient admissions. This will be in a patient-friendly format, and display information such as medication lists, upcoming appointments and patient education resources. All this information will also be available to GPs in clinic letters and discharge summaries. We are engaging with GP Leads to establish which information is most relevant to minimise workload on practices reviewing correspondence.

- **MyChart patient portal**

- Patients may have access to their health care record at both Trusts using MyChart, either through a smartphone app or online. MyChart is a positive step forward for patients, and will give them access to investigation results and letters, facilitate direct communication between patients and their hospital teams, and ultimately empower our patients to get more involved in decisions about their health. We are working closely with the national NHS App team regarding the potential for integration between the two systems in the future.
- Clinicians at both Trusts will continue to communicate with GPs through normal channels. In addition, patients may choose to grant a particular health professional (e.g. their GP) temporary access to their MyChart record. Those healthcare professionals may choose to write comments in which will be visible next time the patient is seen in secondary care. There is no expectation on the patient’s usual GP to monitor their MyChart App. This is handled by the Trust’s clinical teams.

- **What will not change as a result of Epic**

Referrals

- The NHS e-Referral Service (ERS) will continue to be used for referrals to the Trusts.

- ERS will also continue to be used for related communication, such as Advice and Guidance (A&G) and Advice and Refer (A&R).
- Referrals or diagnostic test requests currently made using email will continue to be made in the same way.

Pathology ordering

- The way GPs request pathology tests will not change at the point Epic goes live on 5 October. We plan to make some changes to the way pathology requests are made in the first half of 2024 – and in the event this does happen, we will ensure GPs are informed well in advance of the changes being made.

What else should you know

- In line with other Trusts who have launched new, large-scale electronic health records, both Guy's and St Thomas' and King's are planning to reduce the amount of routine, planned care activity we carry out in the run up to, during, and after go-live of the Epic system. Urgent and emergency activity will be running at normal levels.
- This will help ensure the system launches successfully, with minimum impact on the care we provide for patients. However, we do appreciate this will mean extended waiting times for some patients on the waiting list for routine planned care, and further information will follow ahead of launch detailing how this will be managed at both Trusts in a way that keeps the impact on patients to a minimum.
- Synnovis is also planning delays to the processing of routine tests while they embed the new Epic system. More detail on this – including the potential impact on GPs requesting tests – will also be provided in due course.

Further information

Over the coming weeks, we will share further and regular information with GPs about our plans for the launch of Epic. As part of this, we also want to ensure we answer any questions or queries you have.

A series of drop-in sessions are being arranged to facilitate questions and answers, and more information will be made available shortly.