EeRS in the Midlands: A Success Story

LOCSU

As part of the NHS plan, post Covid, to move to digital solutions to streamline and improve patient care, Eyecare electronic Referral Systems (EeRS) were developed with the aim of making the eye care referral process more efficient, accurate, and user-friendly for both patients and healthcare professionals.

Following an engagement study, Midlands NHSE (NHS England) and NHSI (NHS Improvement) decided to commission and procure a single provider across the Midlands, Cinapsis. In many other areas, providers were sought by each ICB, leading to a great deal of variation in the success, or otherwise, of EeRS across the country. Midlands LOCs have been instrumental in the adoption of EeRS, from procurement to rollout and business as usual, by working closely and collaboratively with their ICBs, trusts and, most importantly, practitioners.

Background

EeRS was a joint initiative of NHS E, NHS I, and NHSX (digital), recognising the need for a more efficient and digital approach to eye care referrals. Early in the process, LOCs knew that for a successful shift to electronic referrals, they needed to work closely with the NHS & ICBs to influence the decisions being made around the service, the provider, funding, training and development. LOC collaboration was essential and a positive approach to the project was adopted.

What We Did

Aware of difficulties in other areas, NHSE/I in the Midlands began a region wide joint venture to implement a single provider to deliver EeRS. From the offset the LOCs were instrumental in ensuring the ICB understood the crucial role LOCs would play in successful delivery of EeRS and the need for adequate funding.

Working with the ICBs, a deployment plan was formulated, with three early adopters enlisted, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire ICS. The supplier engaged extensively with stakeholders and events to build relationships, answer questions and share lessons from their experience in deploying EeRS in other regions.

Significant funding was secured for LOCs – partly through their lobbying – enabling them to recruit Local EeRS Clinical Champions to support rollout, boost engagement, and help practices with training in Information Governance, compliance, clinical safety, and nhs.net. There was additional funding was for early adopters and limited infrastructure support for some practices.

As the project advanced, a monthly regional LOC oversight group was formed to share updates, best practices, and learning. The service provider actively responded to feedback and continues to develop and improve the platform. Strong engagement from Clinical Champions and LOCs, along with excellent practitioner feedback, led to high uptake – some LOCs saw 100% practice registration – driven by sustained outreach and regular practice visits.

Outputs and Impacts

The rollout of EeRS across the Midlands has been a huge success, with most LOCs reporting over 90% take up by practices to date.

Key Challenges
- Early planning required multiple meetings with limited progress; later improved through clear agendas, inclusion of decision makers, and managed expectations
- Engaging late or reluctant adopters involved direct contact and practice visits, which proved effective despite challenges in larger LOC areas
- Cross-border referrals varied ICB approach: collaboration between LOCs and with ICBs helped address inconsistencies
- Initial platform issues (e.g. SPoAs, provider selection) were resolved through ongoing engagement between LOCs, ICBs, and the service provider
- Less IT-savvy practitioners were supported through LOC-led training, guidance, and direct engagement, encouraging uptake and system use

Key Successes
- Excellent engagement and uptake from practitioners, with some LOCs reporting 100% enrolment in the service
- The service was able to be launched ahead of schedule in some areas, due to excellent planning, engagement and collaboration

- Improved engagement between LOCs and ICBs, with more ICBS attending committee meetings and developing new communication routes
- Reduced waiting time for patients
- Overall positive feedback from practices, LOCs, ICBs and patients.
- High volumes of referrals going through the system
- Useful data produced by the system
- Ease of implementation and use
- APIs developed nationally with support from Sector Bodies, Practice Management Software providers and large multiples, reducing the need for multiple data entry

Testimonials

"The Cinapsis team is very efficient; any issues are resolved quickly by support staff."

Vinesh, Leicestershire and Rutland LOC

"EeRS has increased LOC engagement and has been really good for relationship building."

Roma, Nottinghamshire LOC

"Close working with ICB has built great relationship and communication routes."

Jon, Coventry and Warwickshire LOC

"It's absolutely amazing. My Optoms love Cinapsis, we're using it all the time for Russells Hall. So really pleased with Cinapsis, you get reports back straight away. You know where the patient is along the journey as well, so if the patient calls the practice, you know if the referral has been picked up or not."

Dudley, Specsavers

Further LOC case studies can be found here