Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust



# **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Internal Referrals into Outpatient Services**

## **Key Points:**

This is a controlled document. Whilst this document may be printed, the electronic version uploaded on the intranet is the controlled copy and printing is not advised. This document must not be saved onto local or network drives but must always be accessed from the intranet.

All employees must adhere to the requirements set out within this document. Any specific responsibilities or actions for particular staff or staff groups will be outlined within the main body of the document and their duties cascaded to them as required.

Promoting equality and addressing health inequalities are at the heart of Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust's values. Throughout the processes detailed within this document the Trust has given due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic, as cited under the Equality Act 2010, and those who do not.

<b>Current Document Status:</b>	Final

Policy Cate	gory:	Title:	Page 1 of 20

Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
Oddice ib.	Version Number, 1.0	I ICVICW Date. 01/0/20

## Contents

1.	Introduction	. 3
2.	Purpose	. 3
3.	Objectives	
4.	Key Performance Indicators	. 3
5.	Scope	
6.	Roles and Responsibilities	
•	Monitor compliance and escalate non-compliance as required	. 4
7.	The Process	
8.	Escalation Protocol	. 5
9.	Risks and Mitigations	. 5
10.	Process for Monitoring Compliance	. 6
11.	Training and Education	. 6
12.	Implementation and Dissemination	. 6
13.	Monitoring Arrangements	. 6
	Supporting Information	
15.	Appendix I – Process Map of Interim Workflow	. 8
	Appendix II - Process Documentation: Workflow for Internal Referrals for Outpatients to	
be s	Scheduled	. 9
17.	Appendix III - Local arrangements for each trust1	16

Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
Codioc ib.	V CIGICII I VAIIIDOI. I.O	I IOVIOW Date. 01/0/20

#### 1. Introduction

This SOP defines the standard process for internal referrals within a Trust to outpatient services, ensuring a structured and efficient approach to managing routine and urgent referrals using the outpatient letter templates. It improves patient care enabling them to be referred to outpatient services avoiding the need to be referred back to GPs when it is urgent or is for the original condition. This process applies to Hillingdon, London Northwest, and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust. All areas where there are existing orders (requests) for internal referrals will continue using these e.g.

- Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust, has orders for their internal referrals therefore this process will continue.
- All cancer upgrades / urgent suspected cancer internal referrals (FDS / 2WW) created within a trust will continue to use their existing processes.

Other areas will use this new process.

## 2. Purpose

This SOP establishes a standardised process for referring patients within the Trusts to outpatient services, ensuring timely, accurate referrals, directed to the appropriate departments. It ensures efficiency and effectiveness to enhance patient care and satisfaction.

## 3. Objectives

- Improve efficiency: Streamline the internal process to reduce the administrative burden and expedite patient care.
- Timely Registration: Ensure all referrals are registered within a day of receipt to enable prompt attention and management.
- Enhance Communication: Strengthen communication between departments to facilitate better co-ordination and information sharing.
- Prioritise Urgent cases: Ensure urgent referrals are identified and managed promptly.
- Reduce Delays: Minimise missed or delayed referrals, enhancing patient outcomes and satisfaction.

## 4. Key Performance Indicators

- Timely Registration: 100% of internal referrals registered within 24 hours of receipt.
- Routine Referrals: 95% processed (uploaded and triaged) within 5 working days of triage
- Urgent Referrals: 100% processed (Uploaded and triaged) within 48 hours of triage
- FDS / 2ww Referrals: 100% scheduled within 14 days

#### 5. Scope

This SOP applies to all centralised and devolved services, including clinical and administrative teams involved in the internal referral process, with the Patient Service

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 3 of 20

Centre (PSC) / Central Booking Office (CBO) / Patient Access Centre (PAC) as the central recipient.

Devolved services are required to follow the same process to ensure consistency and standardisation, with local booking teams managing internal referral bookings for their respective services.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

## a. Referring Clinician

• Complete, sign and submit the letter in Powerchart, copying in the "internal referrals" message centre inbox for your trust.

## b. Central Booking Offices / Patient Service Centre (PSC) Team

- Access the internal referrals inbox via Cerner Message Centre daily.
- Upload all internal referrals onto Rego Vantage within 1 working day.
- Assign a nominated administrator to manage access to the inbox.

#### c. Triaging Clinician (via Rego Vantage)

- o Review, triage, and provide booking advice within the specified timeframe:
  - o **Routine**: within 48 hours of upload
  - o Urgent: within 24 hours of upload
- Confirm the care pathway and provide booking instructions.

## d. Booking Administrator

- Monitor triage decisions and schedule patient appointments accordingly.
- Confirm the appointment with the patient.

## e. Service Management Team

- Monitor compliance and escalate non-compliance as required.
- Review referral performance metrics and implement improvements.

#### 7. The Process

## Step 1: Referral Process – Refer to appendix for the process map and screenshots

 The referring clinician signs and submits the letter in Powerchart, including details of which service you want the internal referral to go to and clinical details. Copy this letter to the "internal referrals" inbox. Any of the Cerner letter templates can be used, detailed; essential; brief correspondence etc. This letter can be the outpatient outcome letter or can be a separate letter, so long as the workflow is followed.

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 4 of 20

Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
Cource ib.	VCISION NUMBER 1.0	I ICVICW Date. 01/0/20

## **Step 2: Management of Internal Referrals Inbox**

- 1. The CBO / PSC / PAC retrieves the letter from the internal referral message centre inbox and uploads the referral letter onto Rego Vantage.
- 2. CBO / PSC / PAC left mouse clicks and selects 'OK' in the Action Pane, adding comments where necessary.

## Step 3: Clinician Triaging

- 1. The receiving department ensures timely triage within the specified timeframe (section 6b above).
- 2. The consultant provides booking advice and confirms the care pathway.
- 3. If the referral needs to be redirected within the trust this can be done on Rego or if the referral is rejected (refer to appendix II section 4)

## **Step 4: Monitoring Triage Decision and Booking**

- 1. The CBO / PSC monitors Rego for triage decisions and book appointments accordingly.
- 2. The CBO / PSC confirms the appointment with the patient.

#### 8. Escalation Protocol

- Referral not uploaded onto Rego within 1 working day: Escalate to CBO / PSC Service Manager.
- Delayed triaging: Escalate to the relevant service management team.
- Persistent non-compliance: Escalate to senior management for review.

## 9. Risks and Mitigations

I Danasaisatiasa

D:-1

Risk Description		Mitigation	
Delay in	Referrals not reviewed within the	Assign backup clinicians, monitor	
consultant	specified timeframes	performance weekly, escalate	
triaging		delays	
Booking delays	Delays in appointment scheduling led	PSC to monitor triage daily,	
after triage	to treatment timeline breaches	maintain a dedicated team for	
		urgent bookings, ensure clinic slot	
		availability.	
Poor	Miscommunication between referring	Establish clear communication	
Communication	teams, PSC and departments	pathways, hold regular service	
		weekly meetings	
Breach of FDS /	Failure to schedule FDS / 2ww	Maintain a FDS / 2ww referral log,	
2ww Targets	patients within 14 days	escalate potential breaches,	
		prioritise at every stage	

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 5 of 20

IT/System Failures	Technical issues with Rego or Cerner	Regular system maintenance, develop manual fallback processes, ensure quick troubleshooting response
Lack of Performance Monitoring	Failure to track referral performance leads to inefficiencies. The internal referrals will be trackable only once loaded on to Rego.	Conduct weekly audits, measure KPIs, review audit results in team meetings
Patient Dissatisfaction	Delays /errors lead to complaints and poor experience	Provide clear communication, train staff, review patient feedback regularly

Review Date: 31/3/26

Version Number: 1.0

## 10. Process for Monitoring Compliance

The Rego platform includes an insight dashboard that displays various metrics, such as:

- Referral volume and turnaround times by specialty.
- Accept / reject volumes by speciality.

Regular audits and KPI tracking will ensure process adherence.

## 11. Training and Education

Source ID:

All new and existing staff involved in the internal referral process must complete Cerner and Rego training as part of their statutory and mandatory training compliance.

Refresher training will be provided annually to ensure ongoing compliance and process adherence.

## 12. Implementation and Dissemination

The implementation of the Internal Referrals process has been set up as a project with an APC wide steering group chaired by Nick Ferran (SRO) feeding into the APC outpatient stakeholder group.

13. Monitoring Arrangements

Lead	Policy Objective	Method	Frequency	Responsible Committee / Group
ICH - Mathy Rajanikanth LNW - Vijayalakshmi Kololgi THH - Becky Farren CWFT - James McKean	To ensure a seamless electronic process for internal referrals to avoid any unnecessary delays for patients	BI report of non- external referrals baseline tracking (total no: of referrals trend) and Rego dashboard for performance monitoring of this SOP	Weekly	Planned Care / Elective Access Groups in each Trust

## 14. Supporting Information

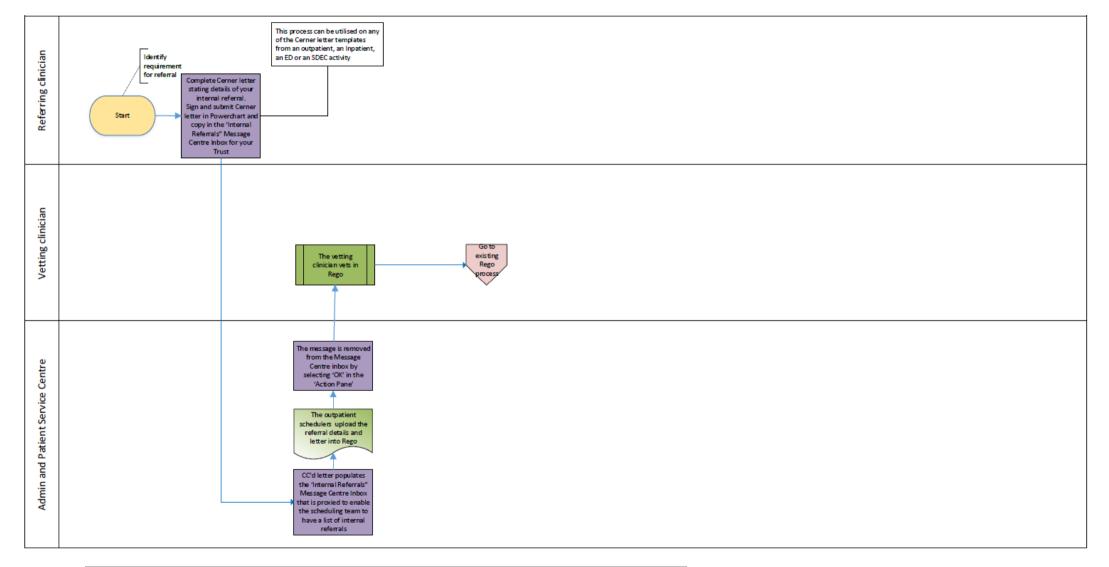
Current Document Information		
Source ID:		
Policy Category:	Title:	Page 6 of 20

S	Source ID:	Versi	on Number: 1.0	Revie	w Date: 31/3/26
Version:	LII.		0.11	41-	
Document			Mathy Rajanika		
	ole Executive Dir		Nick Ferran, CC		um /ICII ODIT\
	Committee / Gr	oup:	internal Referra	Steering Gro	up (ICH – OPIT)
Date Appr		Committee			
	ied by Executive for Review:	Committee.			
Target Au					
Category:					
		Current [	Document Repla	ces	
Previous [	Document Name	:			
Previous \	Version Number:	1			
Previous A	Approval Date:				
17		Suppo	rting Reference	S	
Keywords	: rust Documents:				
Related 1	rust Documents:				
		Doci	ment Location		
Document	t Location:	5000			
Boodinon	L LOGALIOTI.				
		Contr	ibuting Authors		
		Referral Steering		ers	
		Referral Steering			
			-		
			onsultation		
Sent to					Date
	e / Groups:	APC Internal	Referral Steering	g, ICH DSP	March
	epartments:				
Individuals	S:	Benjamin Ell	is		
		Versio	n Control Histor	V	
Version	Date		licy Lead	<i></i>	hanges
V0.1	15/2/25		Rajanikanth	_	
V0.2	15/2/25		stopher Hill	Added	Screenshots
V0.3	20/2/25		stopher Hill		Cerner workflow
V0.5	6 & 12/3/25		Milicia		ack from DSP
V0.6	19/3/25		Milicia	Feedba	ack from DSP
V0.4	21/3/25			Internal Ref	Steering Grp review
V0.7	27/3/25	Vijaya	a and Nuno	THH an	nd LNW review
				Added the	e Rego rejection
V0.8	14/04/25	Debbie E	nsor-Dean and	process and	final feedback from
	14/04/23	Mathy	Rajanikanth		erral Steering Group
					cer upgrades
V0.9	25/04/25		Ensor-Dean		ication from Rego
V0.10	28/04/25		Ensor-Dean		ed 2WW, KPIs
V0.11	28/04/25		Ensor-Dean		local arrangements
V0.12	02/05/25		nsor-Dean and		ents and agreement
\/1.0			Rajanikanth		steering group
V1.0	06/05/25	שוממשע	Ensor-Dean	unange	d to final status

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 7 of 20

Source id.   Version invuliber i.o   Neview Date, 31/3/20	Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
---	------------	---------------------	----------------------

## 15. Appendix I – Tactical Workflow



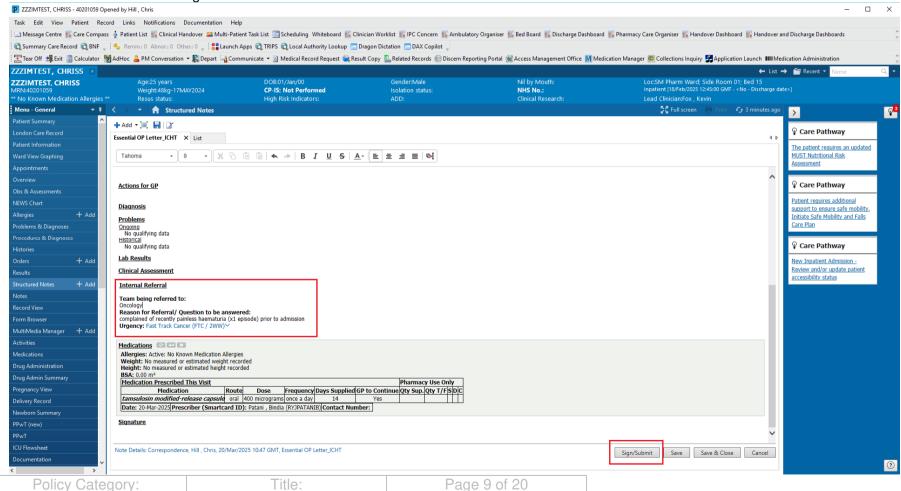
Policy Category:	Title:	Page 8 of 20

Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
Course ib.	* 0101011 1 <b>1</b> 01110011 110	1 10 110 11 Date: 0 17 07 20

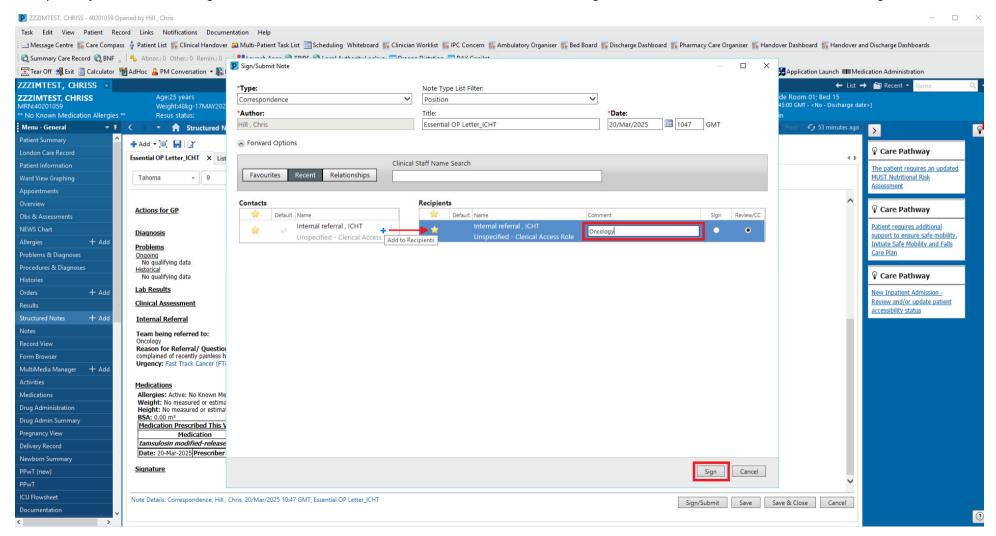
- 16. Appendix II Process Documentation: Workflow for Internal Referrals for Outpatients to be Scheduled
- 1. <u>Clinician workflow</u> The referring clinician whilst completing a (any) Cerner letter within it, details the internal referral. Use the ".int" autotext below to include the details of where the referral is to go / which service.

.int \*

2. The clinician then signs & submits the letter as usual:



3. On the subsequent "Sign/ Submit" screen the clinician copies in (as a recipient) their Trust's 'Internal Referrals" inbox (the clinician enters the specialty to whom referring to into the comment field so that the schedulers can distinguish which referral is for which team and signs the form:



Policy Category:	Title:	Page 10 of 20

Source ID: Version Number: 1.0 Review Date: 3	1/3/26
---	--------

The referring Clinician's part is then complete. The letter will outbound to the patients GP etc. as usual and is sent to the Internal Referral inbox for the central booking teams (CBO / PSC / PAC) to load the referral on to Rego for triaging.

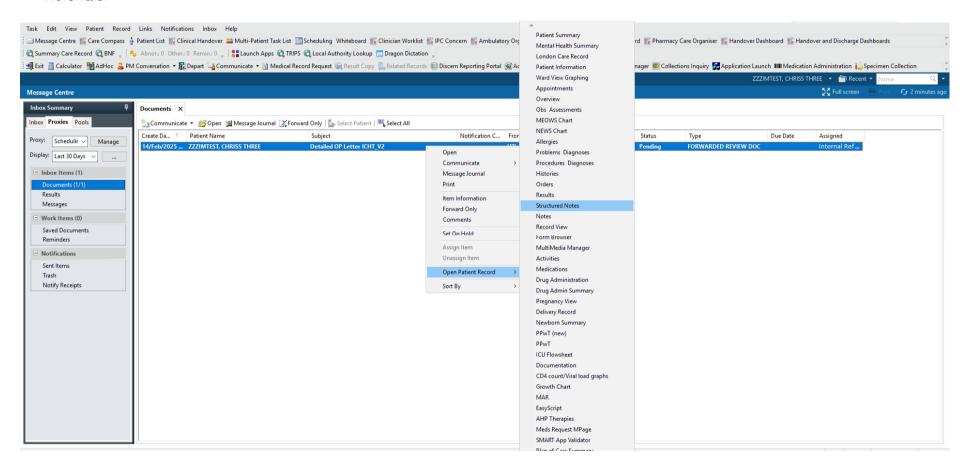
4. The receiving clinician triages the referral in the Internal / tertiary referral tab and either accepts or rejects the referral



- 5. Accepted referrals are scheduled by the CBO / PSC / PAC as usual
- 6. Rejected referrals are emailed from the <a href="rego.nec@nhs.net">rego.nec@nhs.net</a> email address to the referring clinician pulling in the reason for rejection comments from Rego within them. This enables the referring clinician to follow any information provided by the triaging clinician. The referring clinician who has been caring for the patient is responsible for writing to the patient (copied to the GP) to inform them of the outcome and next steps.
- 7. If the referral needs to be redirected, the clinician can do this at the vetting stage by clicking redirect and then choosing the relevant service from the drop down, then confirm. This will send the referral to the vetting list for the new service.

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 11 of 20

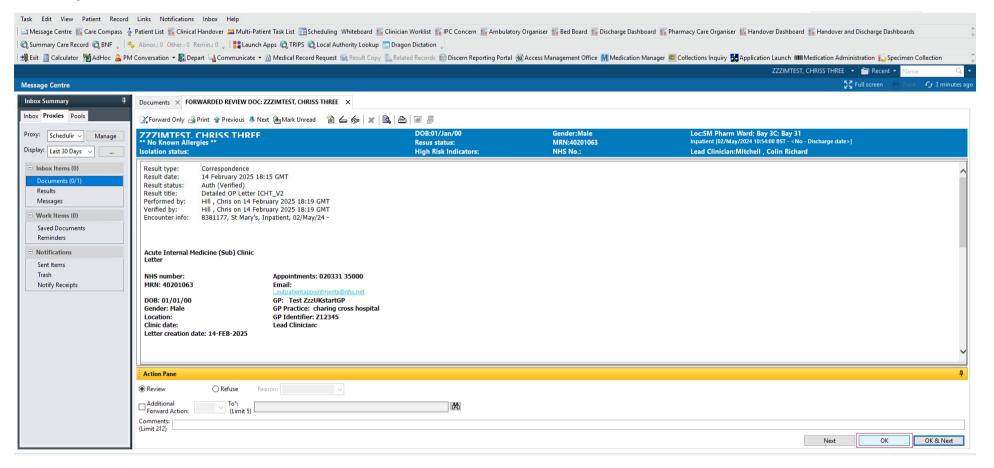
8. <u>Admin process</u> – Upon receipt of the referral in the Internal Referral inbox, all members of the Scheduling Team proxied into this can see the Referrals:



Right-clicking on the row enables direct navigation to the Structured note wherein are the referral details

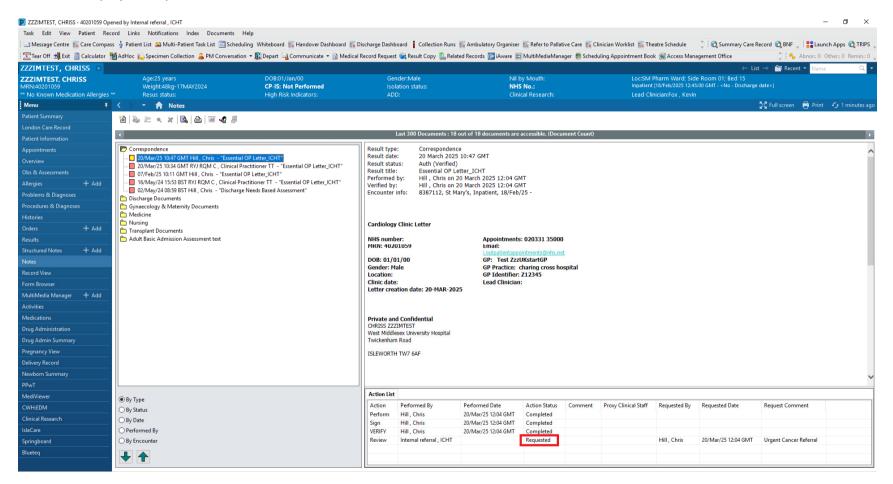
Policy Category:	Title:	Page 12 of 20

9. The Scheduler then uploads the referral letter into Rego adding the details of the referral into the mandatory fields and any comments. Entering the referring clinicians email address enables any rejected referrals to automatically be sent back to the refer with the reasons for rejection. Once the referral has been loaded onto Rego remove it from the Message Centre inbox by left-clicking on the message and on the subsequent screen selecting 'OK' in the 'Action Pan



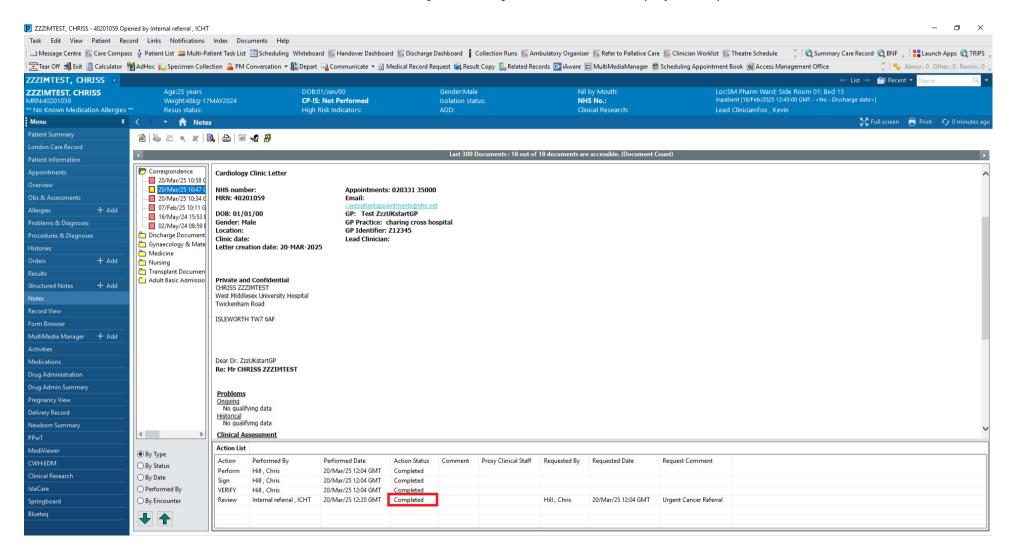
Policy Category:	Title:	Page 13 of 20

10. Subsequently an audit trail can be found in the Action List Section in Notes (prior to the Schedular clicking OK in Action Pane above) the Review detail displays 'Requested':



Policy Category:	Title:	Page 14 of 20

11. After the Scheduler has clicked OK in Action Pane above [P12 herein] the Review detail displays 'Completed':



Policy Category:	Title:	Page 15 of 20

Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26	
------------	---------------------	----------------------	--

# **Appendix III – local arrangements for each Trust**

# **Chelsea and Westminster Foundation Trust local arrangements**

CWFT already use Cerner orders for internal referrals these will continue

The change for CWFT will be the orders loaded onto Rego Vantage, will at triage, be able to be rejected as per agreed protocols using the new workflow.

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 16 of 20



# Imperial local arrangements

Imperial has various internal referral arrangements currently. These will take time to transition to an APC standard. This transition will only fully complete once the strategic solution is available replacing existing electronic processes.

# 1. Exclusions to the new internal referral process and therefore this SOP

Initially all outpatient-to-outpatient referrals will be included i.e. clinicians will send an outpatient letter to the CBO / PSC for loading on Rego, vetting and then scheduling. The areas excluded are

- a. Cancer upgrades existing processes will continue for cancer referrals and cancer upgrades
- b. Inpatient to outpatient referrals these will continue with existing processes and will follow once outpatient-to-outpatient is embedded
- c. ED referrals currently using e-Trauma e.g. orthopaedics, plastics
- d. Referrals into maternity as the workflow is different and so existing processes will continue
- e. Services that do not currently use the Cerner letter process i.e. Sexual Health and Ophthalmology
- f. Therapies will continue with their current process and move the strategic (non-Rego) process when available

# 2. Phasing

All of the above with the exception of Maternity and those in section e. will be planned to move in a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 17 of 20

Source ID: Versio	n Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
-------------------	---------------	----------------------

# The Hillingdon Hospitals Trust local arrangements

THH has various internal referral arrangements at present, and these will take time to transition to an APC standard. This transition will only fully complete once the strategic solution is available to replace existing electronic processes.

# 1. Implementation

Due to THH's de-centralised function in patient access, the booking centre will OWL all internal referrals in the message centre onto Cerner and upload to Rego e-vetting for clinical triage.

The Central Booking Team will only book accepted referrals following clinical triage for the services that are currently covered, which means admin teams within the remaining services will need to log in to Rego and book from the accepted list on Rego under e-vetting.

Some admin staff already have access, but any remaining will need to be set up and the GM for Patient Access will provide the access and some screen shots of the process of booking from the accepted tab on Rego, if required, in addition to the user guides and videos circulated.

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 18 of 20

Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
00000		

# Exclusions to the new internal referral process and therefore this SOP

Initially all outpatient-to-outpatient referrals will be included i.e. clinicians will send an outpatient letter to the CBO / PSC / PAC via message centre on Cerner for loading on Rego, vetting and then scheduling. The areas excluded are:

- a. **Cancer upgrades** these will be completed by the clinician placing an order and following the agreed guidance circulated by the cancer team
- b. **Inpatient to outpatient referrals** these will continue with existing processes and will follow once outpatient-to-outpatient is embedded
- c. UTC/ED referrals currently using agreed and well documented/embedded processes
- d. Referrals into maternity as the workflow is different and so existing processes will continue
- e. Services that do not currently use the Cerner letter process or have existing electronic processes, i.e. Maxillo-facial and stroke services
- f. **Therapies** will continue with their current process and move the strategic (non-Rego) process when available

# 2. Phasing

All of the above, with the exception of Maternity and those in section e., will be planned to move in a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase.

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 19 of 20

Source ID:	Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 31/3/26
------------	---------------------	----------------------

## **London North West local arrangements**

LNW Internal referrals currently are sent to the generic Patient Access centre email (Inwh-tr.access-centre@nhs.net) as well as sending emails via PPCs and Secretaries. These will take time to transition to an APC standard using Cerner message centre.

# Exclusions to the new internal referral process and therefore this SOP

Initially all outpatient-to-outpatient referrals will be included i.e. clinicians will send an outpatient letter to the CBO / PSC / PAC for loading on Rego, vetting and then scheduling. The areas excluded are:

- a. Cancer upgrades existing processes will continue for cancer referrals and cancer upgrades
- b. ED referrals currently using e-Trauma e.g. orthopaedics
- c. Referrals into maternity as the workflow is different and so existing processes will continue
- d. Services that do not currently use Cerner letters i.e. sexual Health, ophthalmology and clinical genetics
- e. Therapies will continue with their current process and move the strategic (non-Rego) process when available
- f. Non-centralised services that process their own referrals:
  - i. IMOS lnwh-tr.imos.bh@nhs.net.
  - ii. ORPAC lnwh-tr.elderlyadmin@nhs.net
  - iii. Anaesthesia Inwh-tr.anaestheticadmin@nhs.net

## **Phasing**

To be agreed to bring any areas without a existing documented procedure for internal referrals into this SOP

Policy Category:	Title:	Page 20 of 20