



# Optical Sector NHS Connectivity Project



This update is to keep you informed about timescales and project milestones. Of the 320 or so practices in Greater Manchester, 264 have registered on the connection ordering portal, so well done everyone. A perfectly reasonable question we keep hearing is “When will I hear from Webstar about the connection?”. The reason they haven’t been in touch yet is we (& they) don’t want anyone connected and paying before there is anything to use. That time is getting closer though.

## Timelines

The target is for the referral module to be live at the end of November for pilot testing, and integration with NHS numbers will follow. This should enable electronic referral of some sort to GPs and Trusts. There is a further target to integrate this module with the NHS eRefer system before October 2018, but more on that later.

Current plan is to get a small number of pilot practices connected by the end of November, with a roll out to all the rest starting a month or so later.

Roll out of Smart Cards and Readers should begin early next year. This will allow access to the summary care record and, crucially, faster lookup of NHS numbers. With a smart card, you type a name and close matches come up in a list. Without it, you have to get the details exactly right as only one name will be returned, making a search more difficult.



The consolidated patient demographic module should be available at the end of May. This will integrate the referral module with all of the GM Primary Eyecare services, for anyone providing these services. Note that we believe there is a strong chance of these services being commissioned on a GM-wide basis during 2018.



### **NHS VPN Connection Tokens**

We have used these in a couple of pilot sites. The ones we have used have been software tokens installed on the PC to be connected, rather than physical tokens such as banks provide. Whilst it is possible to read the code off the screen on one PC and rush round to connect another, it isn't terribly convenient, so you may wish to bear this in mind when ordering your connection type.

### **The Future**

The NHS Digital website has the following information:



#### ***The Standard Contract for 2018/19***

*The Standard Contract for 2018/19 requires the full use of the NHS e-Referral Service for all consultant led first outpatient appointments*

*Building on the CQUIN indicator in 2017/18, from 1 October 2018, providers will no longer be paid for activity which results from referrals made other than through the NHS e-Referral Service. Further guidance will be released in 2017 explaining the detailed rules around non-payment arrangements to support local health communities in their planning for the paper switch off for elective referrals.*

The highlighted section is key. For any direct routine referrals, if they don't go through eRefer then the Trust won't be paid, so that means they won't accept them. This has huge implications for most cataract and repeat measure schemes nationwide. Our new referral module will integrate with eRefer thus meeting the requirement for Trusts. Of course, it needs an NHS connection since we will need the NHS number. It seems that Greater Manchester is ahead of the rest of the country as far as preparation for this is concerned!

### **Thank you**

The Confederation of GM LOCs, and the NHS in Manchester are hugely grateful to you all for co-operating, participating and being so patient about the project. It really is a leap into the future and we are conscious that there is a cost attached for many of you, so thanks you for showing faith in our belief of what the future will require. As it happens, the piece above about NHS Digital shows we are on the right track. We believe that means it is inevitable that all practices in England are going to need NHS connections very soon, and GM is leading the way.