

12. Use of templates and pro-forma

If constructed with due diligence, templates and pro-forma can play an important role in ensuring concise and appropriate clinical information is exchanged between GPs and specialists. Using an integrated GP system, it is possible for e-RS to easily 'pull' data from GP records and quickly construct a referral 'letter', which saves time for GPs and/or their admin staff. These templated documents, which should be agreed locally between GPs, providers and commissioning organisation, can be attached to the e-RS referral.

Since patients have the right to choose to be referred to any provider in the country for elective (as opposed to emergency) care and, therefore, may have several providers listed on their e-RS shortlist, referral templates and pro-forma should be as generic as possible and should be 'owned' by the referring or commissioning organisation, with the content having been agreed with local providers and endorsed by Local Medical Committees.

Any provider of NHS services receiving a referral via e-RS, should accept clinical referral information in whatever format has been approved for use by the referring/commissioning organisation and endorsed by the responsible LMC. So long as adequate and appropriate clinical information has been added to the e-RS referral, providers should not refuse to accept a referral simply because it is not on their locally-branded template.