

ELECTIVE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

PROCESS FOR OFFERING CHOICE

1. Process Intent:

“That the population of Croydon be provided with the most clinically appropriate secondary care, and that this care, wherever possible, is offered within the Croydon area by NHS clinicians.”

In delivering this process intent there are several considerations:

- Firstly, clinicians and patients together determine the most appropriate clinical pathway for the patient at the earliest possible opportunity;
- Secondly, where it is practicable, secondary care services are offered locally by NHS services;
- Thirdly, patients are assisted to ensure that they receive the most appropriate care and are able to benefit from locally integrated pathways and are provided with appropriate choice.

The “Provider of Choice Programme” has considered all three questions, together with national policy regarding electronic referral and the Department of Health’s Choice Framework that can be found at: www.england.nhs.uk/patient-choice.

2. The Process

The “Blue Button Service”

The Blue Button Service is essentially part of Electronic Referral System (eRS) functionality, which enables GPs to send through a clinical request to a secondary care clinician including advice and guidance.

In order to ensure that patients receive the most appropriate care (which may include going on a straight to test pathway, being expedited as an urgent case, or going to a tertiary service provider), it is our process that all referrals should go through the e-referral system using the “blue button” service where available. The “Blue Button” service means that the referral from the GP is reviewed within 48 hours by a secondary care clinician, and a determination is made of the most appropriate next step. In some cases, this may be the provision of advice to the GP which does not involve immediate secondary care. The service will help and assist GPs to manage the pathway and communication effectively.

Once the secondary care clinician has reviewed the referral, the customer care team, hosted by Croydon Health Services NHS Trust (CHS), will contact patients directly by phone to assist them in getting onto the right pathway quickly. This team follow the instructions of the clinical reviewer and will liaise with the patient directly. If the patient requires care that is not provided in Croydon, the team will help the patient access that service without delay. If the appropriate service is provided in Croydon, the team will highlight those services, including our integrated pathways, providing waiting time information for both the first appointment and whole pathway as required.

The patient will be assisted in finding the right next step for them. There may be many reasons for a patient to choose another provider, for instance, they wish to see a specific clinician, waiting times are better, travel is easier, or it is more convenient in other ways. If this is the case, the next available appointment will be offered for that provider, and an appointment booked.

3. Ensuring appropriate local care

In line with our process of providing high quality local services where possible, all CHS services are subject to ongoing improvement and change, both in terms of the provision of the best, most up to date pathways, and constantly improving customer service. These continuous improvement plans will be informed by the choices made by patients and patient feedback, such that patients increasingly choose to be treated locally because it is seen as the best, most appropriate service.

4. Benefits to local Croydon people

It is in the interest of the local system to ensure that Croydon people have access to effective and efficient local health services. This includes timely access and high quality care across both emergency and planned care.

Customer service is paramount and therefore to support and assist patients navigate the access to right care, in the right place at the right time, a dedicated patient helpline has been set up to enable patients to manage their own bookings more easily. The service is available Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm.

5. Supporting Primary Care

In addition to ensuring that patients receive the most appropriate care, this initiative also supports learning and educational opportunities across both primary and secondary care clinicians through the provision of advice and guidance services.

GP practices are contracted to provide core medical care to patients. It is noted that general practice is stretched in terms of both demand for care and provision of care in primary care. This initiative should reduce time-consuming administration for GPs and practice staff. The customer care team is designed to reduce the administrative burden of booking and changing hospital appointments for their patients. In addition, if GP practices

have queries regarding their patients, a supplementary dedicated Elective GP Helpline is available for the practice to ring.

Building on the peer review and demand management initiative, GP practices will also be encouraged to improve quality of care including when they use the eRS system, via the “blue button” as part of a peer review process.

Amended 12th August 2019