

Harrow Electronic Referral Optimisation Service (HEROS) Pilot

FAQs

Further Frequently Asked Questions

Why do you need this scheme.....

We know in Harrow that when you need to see a consultant or be referred to another service from their GP surgery, too many of you are being referred to an inappropriate service or could get better care, more quickly, elsewhere.

This wastes your and the NHS's time.

It also wastes valuable public funds at a time when, more than ever, the NHS needs to be as efficient as possible.

.....yes but why isn't my local GP referring me to the right place in the first place already?

Most of the time, your GP does exactly that. However, there is a very large number of services that you can be referred to and there are clinically agreed pathways – places to refer patients to for specific illnesses such as lung disease – that GPs have agreed are better for you.

We want to make sure everyone gets the same consistent, high quality level of service when they are referred.

Also, the HEROS pilot will help when a practice employs a locum GP or a new GP who initially doesn't have a full grasp of the local system.

The services will not overrule your GP's decision. The aim is simply to work with GPs so these pathways and best practice are followed consistently and you get the right care in the right place at the right time.

Will the HEROS pilot save the money that “poor” referral costs?

Yes and the evidence says that the key to doing this will be on focusing on working with GPs on what is best for patients.

This is exactly what we want to do.

We are also piloting our referral service first so, if we do go ahead with a permanent service, we can learn all the lessons locally in order to both provide better care for patients and make the best use of scarce NHS resources.

Can the HEROS pilot overrule any of my GP's decisions?

No, the HEROS pilot will only work with the information your GP shares about you through the Harrow-wide shared database used by all of the practices.

It can't therefore second guess what you and your GP have decided is the best course of action.

What it can do is make sure you get to the right care in the right place at the right time.

The NHS constitution says I can choose where I go for treatment. Doesn't this service stop that?

It should in fact increase your choices.

You will be able to exercise your choice by being able to choose where you would like to be treated.

Doctors will be able to support your choice by including this information as part of the referral.

The HEROS pilot team will be able to offer additional choice if the patient's first choice is not available because of their knowledge of the local area and the services available.

What if I don't speak English?

The HEROS pilot has the ability to communicate in over 100 languages. The referral form should indicate your first language.

If it's cheaper, doesn't that mean I'll get a second class service?

You should get a better service as it'll help people to the right treatment first time. For those less able to move around, it'll also help with transport.

What is clinical triage?

This is a process which will ensure you are referred to the most appropriate clinician for the appropriate level of care within an agreed period of time.

It's about finding the right place for the right person at the right time.

What is non-clinical triage?

This is the process which helps direct you to the most appropriate appointment at the most appropriate time, and identify patients who have an immediate medical need.

It's about making sure those with the highest clinical need are seen first. It also about making sure those with particular needs, such as help getting to their appointment, get the right support.

How will I be contacted?

You will be contacted within 48 hours of your referral be received by the HEROS pilot team. If you cannot be reached the team will try and contact you at least three times. If you cannot be reached by their third attempt they will make an appointment on your behalf and write to you. If this arrangement is not convenient you will have the option of re-arranging the appointment to a more convenient time and place.

Who do I need to call to re-arrange the appointment?

There will be a letter given to you by your GP at the time of your referral, if you wish to change your appointment please call the number written on the letter.

What hours will the HEROS pilot be open?

The service hours of operation will be 0800-2000 hours. The service will be contactable to GPs and patients from the hours of 0800-1800 Monday to Friday and 0900-1300 on Saturdays. There will be no service on Sunday. The contact details are:

Freephone: 0800 027 9289

Landline: 0208 269 3404

Email: Harrow.HEROS@nhs.net

We are rolling this service out across Harrow gradually, please do not phone this number unless you have been referred by your GP via the HEROS pilot.

What happens if there are no suitable appointments for me?

The HEROS pilot will be able to call all the local hospitals to check whether there are appointments available and to make sure that all the hospitals have kept them informed of available appointments.

How do I cancel an appointment?

You can call the HEROS pilot team directly to cancel an appointment.

How will the HEROS pilot ensure their information is accurate?

The HEROS pilot will work closely with Harrow CCG and all the local providers, both in secondary care and the community services, to ensure they have a comprehensive and up to date guide to Harrow.

What information is usually included in a referral?

The following:

- Your full contact details, including current address, mobile and home telephone numbers and whether you have agreed for a message to be left on an answer phone or with the family.
- Your NHS number (and hospital number if known)
- Details of the presenting complaint, specifically:
 - the duration, course and severity of the clinical episode (i.e your illness or injury)
 - what treatments have already been given
 - copies of the results of any examination or investigations e.g. blood tests, ECG or radiology
- History of allergies or hypersensitivities
- Significant/relevant past medical history
- Current/repeat medication
- Smoking status – essential for respiratory, cardiology referrals
- Current BMI (i.e. the most recent measure that is no more than two years old) – essential for Orthopaedic referrals for problems with weight-bearing joints
- Relevant social circumstances and any special considerations – e.g. sensory disabilities, requirement for an interpreter, patient transport needs.

Are there any services not covered by the HEROS pilot?

Yes. The principle behind the HEROS pilot is that it will process all referrals generated for Harrow patients. However, for various pragmatic reasons, some referrals will be excluded from the service when it commences operation.

The following table shows the list of Referral Types that will be excluded from the HEROS pilot process when the service commences and it will be appropriate for GP practices to make direct referrals to the service. As clinical pathways and services are reviewed this list may be updated.

Referral Type	
Two week wait/cancer referrals	Liaison Psychiatry – services in hospitals that link mental and physical health services (this video has more information)
Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU)	Mental health talking therapies known as IAPT
Rapid Access Chest Pain Clinic	Non face-to-face consultations
Diagnostics (urgent)	Urgent Community Service Referral (district Nursing, Health visiting, etc)
Ambulatory Emergency Care	Patients with acute conditions requiring immediate referral to the medical/surgical/orthopedic/ paediatric registrars
End of Life Single Point of Access service.	Harrow Community services

In addition, referrals for community nursing services that are currently made via the CLCH SPA will continue to be made via the CLCH SPA and not the HEROS pilot. However, all referrals to community specialty services, such as those provided by Harrow Health CIC, should all be directed through the HEROS pilot

The service is being described as a pilot service – why? Does this mean more changes in future?

Referral Optimisation was introduced for Brent Patients last year and has proved successful. It makes sense to align services where there are close symmetries of requirement and landscape, so the pilot service in Harrow will be based on the Brent model.

However, before we commit to a longer-term arrangement, we want to ensure that we capture the views and experiences of patients, referrers and other stakeholders.

The 18-month pilot will provide an opportunity for a full evaluation of referral optimisation and appropriate adaptation of the service specification and associated performance requirements for when we commission a follow-on service.

How will this interact with patient booking systems at LNWH?

The service will join up with LNWH's systems. Across the country, all referrals have to be set up on an electronic referral system called E-RS (this was previously known as choose and book) which is used by GP practices and Hospitals.

We are also part of a working group helping to harmonise referral processes with LNWH as part of the NHS digital programme.

HEROS role is to help once a referral is made by making sure you are going to the right place, arranging patient transport if it's needed, changing your appointment date if you can't make it and booking a new appointment if you miss your original one.

I use the NHS a lot and I prefer going to certain hospitals or services, can I specify the hospital I want to go to?

Yes. You have a legal right to any organisation that provides clinically appropriate care for your condition that has been appointed by the NHS to provide that service.

You can read more about your rights [here](#):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-choice-framework/the-nhs-choice-framework-what-choices-are-available-to-me-in-the-nhs#fn:1>

One of the things this service will do is cut down on referrals between consultants at my hospital. But, I have multiple health issues, should I be worried I'll be passed around the system more under this system?

No. The HEROS service helps make sure you get the right care in the right place every time.

If you are seen by a consultant and need to be seen by another consultant as part of care and support for that particular health complaint, HEROS will not interfere with this process.

If, however, your consultant decides that you are, in fact, in the wrong place entirely, you will be referred back to your GP through the HEROS service.

Hopefully, HEROS should make sure this doesn't happen in the first place.

Nevertheless, it is right for the HEROS service to check where there is disagreement over a referral and update policies and guidelines if necessary.

I see more than one consultant at different hospitals – how will this service affect me?

The HEROS pilot will not interfere in your ongoing care from any particular hospital or provider.

The only difference you might notice is if you are referred by a consultant to another consultant or service for a different health issue. Such referrals will go back to the HEROS pilot. It should help you by making sure you are going to the right place, ensuring your GP knows how your care is going and helping you get to your appointment.