

iRefer – Service Definition (G-Cloud 15)

1. What the Service Is

iRefer is a web-hosted, subscription-based clinical radiology referral guidance service published by the Royal College of Radiologists (RCR). To facilitate appropriate referrals to radiology departments, the RCR has published iRefer guidelines since 1989, and iRefer is widely used to promote evidence-based imaging.

The service is intended for use by healthcare professionals to support them in determining the most appropriate imaging investigation for a wide range of clinical problems and in meeting their obligations under the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations (IR(ME)R).

The service is delivered through a cloud-hosted web application and native mobile applications (iOS and Android). It provides reference guidance only and does not generate patient-specific recommendations.

Access to iRefer guideline content via application programming interfaces (APIs) is available under separate commercial arrangements and is not included within the scope of this G-Cloud service.

2. Clinical Scope and Responsibilities

iRefer provides evidence-based referral guidance intended to inform and support clinical decision-making in various care settings. The guidance is designed to assist clinicians in selecting imaging tests that are most likely to answer the clinical question while taking into account radiation exposure and patient safety.

iRefer is **not a medical device** and is not intended to meet the definition of a medical device under applicable UK medical device regulations. It provides reference guidance only and does not perform automated or algorithmic decision-making.

The service does **not**:

- Perform diagnoses or clinical decision-making
- Generate patient-specific recommendations
- Store or process patient-identifiable clinical data
- Provide integrated clinical decision support within EHR, RIS, PAS, or order communications systems
- Replace local clinical judgement or statutory responsibilities under IR(ME)R

The role of the radiologist (or radiographer acting as radiological practitioner) in justifying examinations remains paramount. Local expertise, resource availability, and individual patient factors may influence decision-making.

3. Guideline Development, Evidence, and Governance

iRefer guidelines are developed using a robust and reproducible methodology based on systematic literature review and expert consensus.

The guideline development methodology follows AGREE II principles and was accredited by NICE Evidence, managed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), for the duration of the scheme. This supports consistency, transparency, and reproducibility in guideline development.

For each guideline:

- Evidence is gathered through structured literature searches
- Draft recommendations are reviewed by panels of expert clinicians
- Consensus is achieved using a Delphi process

Recommendations are informed by the supporting evidence, consideration of radiation dose, and cost-effectiveness. Guidelines are reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to reflect new evidence and changes in clinical practice.

4. How the Service Is Delivered

iRefer is delivered as a fully managed Software as a Service (SaaS) platform hosted on Microsoft Azure.

- Content and platform data are backed up automatically in line with Azure standard practices
- Azure resilience and redundancy features support business continuity
- Data can be restored in the event of platform failure or corruption

The service is designed to tolerate infrastructure failures without long-term loss of access to guideline content.

5. Getting Started and Leaving the Service

Onboarding

- Self-service account creation via the iRefer website or mobile applications

- Optional organisational or team-based access management
- Online help content and user guidance
- Email-based support for account, access, or authentication queries

End users are authenticated using account-based credentials or federated identity providers. The service supports username and password authentication, as well as identity federation using single sign-on (including SAML-based SSO and supported social login providers). Where configured by an organisation, access may also be restricted by approved IP address ranges, allowing users accessing from those networks to be granted access under the organisation's subscription without individual user accounts.

No mandatory training, implementation project, or professional services are required to begin using the service.

Offboarding

- Users or organisations may terminate access in line with contractual terms
- Service access ends upon account closure or subscription expiry
- Personal data is retained and deleted in accordance with published privacy notices and data-retention schedules
- As a reference guidance service, no clinical or patient data is exported on exit, as the service does not capture or store patient-specific clinical information.

6. Availability, Performance, and Support

- The service is designed for high availability, excluding planned maintenance and factors outside the supplier's control
- Search and navigation performance is optimised for point-of-care use
- Email-based support is provided during UK business hours, excluding public holidays

Service levels are consistent across all customers using the platform.

7. Support After Go-Live

- Email-based support for technical issues and access queries
- Issue triage and resolution managed by the supplier support team
- Guidance provided for known issues, planned changes, or service updates

No on-site support, bespoke consultancy, or custom development is included.

8. Technical and Network Requirements

End Users

- Modern web browser (current or supported versions)
- Internet connectivity
- Supported iOS or Android versions for native mobile applications

Offline access to previously accessed content is available within the native mobile applications.

Network

- Outbound HTTPS (TCP 443) access
- No requirement for inbound firewall rules or fixed IP allow-listing

No specialist hardware, local servers, or customer-managed infrastructure is required.

Accessibility

The iRefer web and mobile applications are designed and tested in line with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards. The interface supports assistive technologies including screen readers, keyboard navigation, zoom, and colour contrast adjustments. Accessibility considerations form part of ongoing development and quality assurance activities.

9. Outages, Maintenance, and Continuity

- Planned maintenance is scheduled outside peak usage periods where possible
- Emergency maintenance may be applied to protect service security or stability
- Service incidents are logged, investigated, and resolved by the supplier

The service does not depend on customer-managed infrastructure for availability.

10. Hosting and Data Location

- The service is hosted on Microsoft Azure data centres located in the UK
- No on-premise or customer-hosted deployment options are available
- The platform is provided as a fully managed SaaS service

11. Security and Data Protection

- Data is encrypted in transit using HTTPS/TLS
- Role-based access controls are applied to administrative and support functions

- The platform is hosted on ISO 27001-aligned cloud infrastructure
- Regular security patching and vulnerability management are applied

The service operates in accordance with UK GDPR and relevant UK data-protection obligations.

12. Access to Data and Exit Management

- Users retain access to guideline content only for the duration of their subscription
- Personal account data is deleted or anonymised in line with published retention policies following exit
- The service does not store or process patient records, diagnostic images, or locally generated clinical data

Usage and engagement analytics are available to users via the web interface during the subscription term, with access governed by user role and permissions. Additional usage reports can be provided on request. No patient or clinical data is included in analytics or reporting.

No bulk export of guideline content is required or supported, as the service functions as a clinical reference platform.

This service definition is provided for Digital Marketplace purposes and contains no pricing or marketing content.