

April 2021

**TO ALL REFERRING GPs**

Hardwick Lane  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP33 2QZ

[www.wsh.nhs.uk](http://www.wsh.nhs.uk)

Dear colleague,

We trust that you and your team are well during these challenging times.

As with your own services, the work of the Echocardiography Department at West Suffolk Hospital has been significantly impacted by Covid-19 and we face continuing high demand, particularly around stroke pathways, heart failure, and our services to cardio-oncology sector for screening of herceptin and anthracycline patients.

To help ensure we see patients as quickly as possible we are asking for your help in making sure we focus on those who are most likely to benefit from an echo.

We recently conducted an audit of our echocardiogram requests from both primary and secondary centres and found that almost a quarter of adult patients referred did not have an appropriate indication for an echo according to British Society of Echocardiography (BSE) guidelines and had normal studies. This potentially puts patients through unnecessary procedures, and creates additional waits for those who would most benefit.

Following consultation with our lead consultant cardiologists we are now implementing the BES updated Clinical Indications and Triage. Our aim is streamline the triage processes, ensure effective utilisation of services, reduce variation, and reduce patient waits.

To help you help us, enclosed are copies of the BSE guidelines, including specific primary care focused guides. Please consider these when making any future referrals.

I understand that on many occasions you are requesting an echo as instructed by a cardiologist, for example you are asked to request open-access echo in one year for a specific patient. In these circumstances please provide as much clinical detail as possible and the request will be triaged appropriately. This should include:

- Reason for request
- Results from any previous echo
- Any previous cardiac history +/- cardiac surgery (including pacemaker implant)

We thank you for your continued support. Your assistance will enable to us ensure we provide a fair and efficient service to all those who really need it in a timely manner.

If you have any concerns or queries regarding the guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact us:

- Dr Liam Ring – Consultant cardiologist [liam.ring@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:liam.ring@wsh.nhs.uk)
- Mr Alex Pearce – Principal cardiac physiologist [alex.pearce@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:alex.pearce@wsh.nhs.uk)

Kind regards

Carla Wilkins  
Chief cardiac physiologist