

FOR ACTION - PATIENT INFORMATION ACCESS (encompass & EpicCare Link)

encompass is an operationally and clinically led transformation programme which is technology enabled with a region wide electronic health and care record at its heart.

For many years staff across HSCNI have accessed patient information via the Northern Ireland Electronic Care Record.

As the new health and care record, encompass will provide a, secure single record that will ultimately replace NIECR as the method for accessing patient health information.

As encompass is rolled out across Northern Ireland it will require referring clinicians (in primary care), other health professionals and external staff to make use of "**EpicCare Link**" to view patient records.

As a primary care Optometrist, you will use EpicCare Link in a similar way to that of NIECR and, in the coming days, you will be provided with a new log-in account specifically for EpicCare Link.

You will be provided with training materials and resources to help you understand and use EpicCare Link, these are accessible when you log-into your new EpicCare Link account

For the foreseeable and until the roll-out of encompass across **all HSC Trusts is complete** you will still also actively need to retain log-in and use NIECR on a regular basis along with EpicCare Link in your discharge of clinical care.

From 9th November 2023 and thereafter if you wish to see information for a patient who was assessed in any way within the South Eastern HSC Trust you **must** use EpicCare Link.

Please read below to find out further information about EpicCare Link.

What is EpicCare Link?

EpicCare Link is a web-based portal that provides read-only access to a level of information held by encompass. EpicCare Link grants access to clinical information documented in encompass, in a similar way to that of NIECR. Optometrists accessing patient and clinical information via EpicCare Link will note additional information beyond what is visible in NIECR and that there is a greater 'scope' of information included in EpicCare Link.

NOTE: Optometrists are reminded that they should only access information for purposes related to the provision of clinical care and that they should **not** view elements of the patient record in EpicCare Link which are not directly relevant to the care they are providing. As with NIECR, the use of EpicCare Link is auditable and hence you must **only access the clinical information needed and relevant to the care you are providing**.

Who will have access to EpicCare Link?

If you have an **active** NIECR account, you will be automatically provisioned access to EpicCare Link starting in November when the first Trust (SEHSCT) goes live. In preparation for the launch of EpicCare Link, ophthalmic services in SPPG undertook a password reset of all inactive NIECR accounts prior to the creation of new EpicCare Link accounts. For optometrists applying for a new NIECR user account, the application form will now also include EpicCare Link. If you have a query about the process for new applications please email ophthalmic services in SPPG in the first instance.

There are some additional users who do not currently have NIECR accounts that will also receive EpicCare Link access as well, such as GP Out of Hours call handlers and Social Care assistants.

Why do I need to use EpicCare Link?

As each HSC Trust goes live with encompass, you will need access to both encompass/EpicCare Link data and NIECR to complete the full health picture for your patients and service users. When all Trusts are live, NIECR will be phased out and EpicCare Link will be the primary source for up-to-date clinical information from HSCNI.

Do I need to be trained on how to use EpicCare Link?

Because of its read-only nature and limited functionality, EpicCare Link does not require robust training and is intuitive to use. User Guides will be available to explain all interactive features, but training is not a requirement to access the portal. Once you log into EpicCare Link, you will be able to **review all tip sheets and user guides** from the main dashboard. Note that videos will not be accessible from the dashboard, but these are not required. **Please take time to review all the training materials before you begin using EpicCare Link.**

It is essential that EpicCare Link users understand the additional functionality that EpicCare Link provides (application and appropriate use) and therefore, in addition to the training materials provided, there are plans for online Q&A sessions and an information webinar. It is important that at least one member of your optometry practice staff attend one of these sessions and/or join the webinar to ensure that any important take-home-messages in respect of the use of EpicCare Link are shared with all optometrists working in the practice.

- EpicCare Link Optometry Information webinar – **14th November @5pm** (hosted by SPPG Ophthalmic Services and will be recorded for subsequent viewing)
- Q&A post-live session 1 – **15th November @ 1pm via Teams** (hosted by encompass)
- Q&A post-live session 2 – **29th November @ 1pm via Teams** (hosted by encompass)

For the **Optometry specific EpicCare Link Information Webinar** please register via the following link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/609769792616031574>

To request an **invite to the Q&A sessions** noted above please email:

@EpicCareLinkHelpDesk@hscni.net indicating which event you would like an invite for.

How will I access EpicCare Link when in my place of work?

EpicCare Link is accessible on your practice PC(s) using the internet browsers listed below. Although EpicCare Link will be accessible from the home page of the HSC Optometry Portal – see image opposite, (alongside the other existing applications used in optometry practices), you do not **need** to connect to the HSC optometry portal to access Epic Care Link. Please follow the steps below to confirm you are able to access the EpicCare Link website and related functionality. **Please conduct these tests when either connected to, or, on the public internet and therefore outside of the HSC Portal.**



1. Navigate to [this webpage](https://epiccarelink.encompass.hscni.net/EpicCareLink/common/epic_login.asp) (https://epiccarelink.encompass.hscni.net/EpicCareLink/common/epic_login.asp) – this is the main EpicCare Link login screen.
 - ❖ Expected response: **image 1**
2. Navigate to [this webpage](https://hswectl.encompass.hscni.net/HSWeb_prd/) (https://hswectl.encompass.hscni.net/HSWeb_prd/) – a ‘hidden’ webpage embedded inside EpicCare Link after logging in
 - ❖ Expected response: **image 2 OR a “404” error – please note that no action is required on receiving this error message**
3. If on attempting **step 1** above, you get a response similar to **image 3**, please direct this issue to your IT team with the following information:
“We are attempting to connect to EpicCare Link, the new web portal for accessing patient data from Trusts in Northern Ireland. It appears we’re unable to access the website due to a potential outbound firewall rule problem. We would need to access the epiccarelink.encompass.hscni.net and hswectl.encompass.hscni.net domains, which are both available on the public internet”.

Image 1

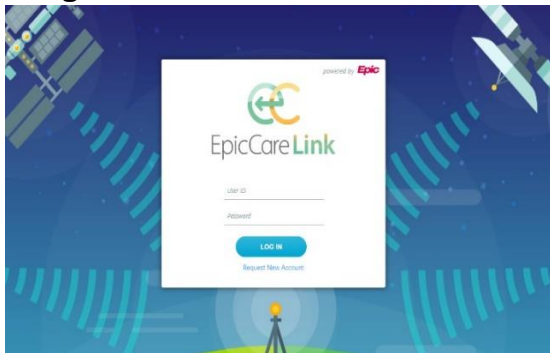


Image 2

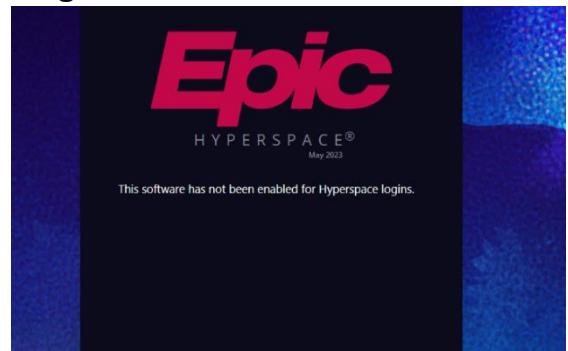
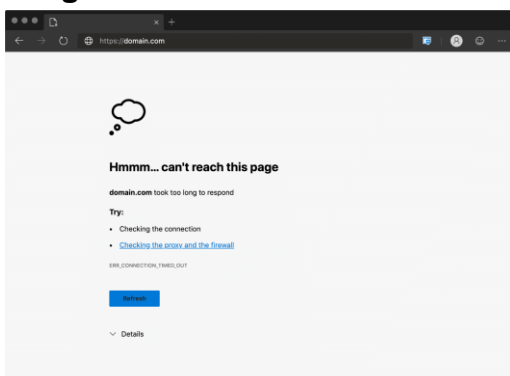


Image 3



Note that EpicCare Link can **only be accessed from one of these browsers**:

- On the Windows operating system:
 - Microsoft Edge version 88 or later
 - Google Chrome version 88 or later
 - Mozilla Firefox version 78 or later
 - On the Macintosh operating system:
 - Firefox version 78 or later
 - Chrome version 88 or later
 - Safari version 14 or later
 - On the Chrome operating system:
 - Chrome version 88 or later
 - EpicCare Link and Tapestry Link can also be accessed by iPads running iOS 14 or later using the Safari browser and Android tablets using the Chrome browser. The native Android browser and other third-party browsers are not supported. The Chrome browser on iOS is also not supported.
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When will I be able to access EpicCare Link?

As an optometrist with an existing NICER account (at end September 2023) you will be given an EpicCare Link account automatically. You will receive your login credentials via your personal email address and thereafter you can undertake your first log-in and gain access to the system. Any optometrist who had applied for an NIECR account from the start of October will be provided with an EpicCare Link account.

**** You must read and action the information in the additional supporting FAQ document which details how to log-in to EpicCare Link for the first time, including the requirements to set-up two factor authentication to access the system – the supporting FAQs document is an important reference document. ****

Note that available clinical data will be minimal until SEHSCT has been live for a few weeks and it will be limited to patients seen at SEHSCT (more data will be available as each subsequent trust goes live). For all other current clinical information as generated from HSC Trusts or GP systems (currently prescribed medicine history) you must still actively refer to NIECR.

OK – so what's next?

This initial communication is to ensure awareness of EpicCare Link amongst current optometrist NIECR users before further more detailed information is delivered by email and through the information webinar and in advance of the user accounts being issued to optometrists in the incoming days. Further information and details about EpicCare Link will be available over the incoming weeks.

If you have any further questions specifically about EpicCare Link **after reviewing the FAQs and attending/watching one of the information sessions**, please use the epiccarelinkhelpdesk@hscni.net email address for your queries.