



## ITK R2 ...what is in the new release?

ITK R2 represents a significant enhancement to the structure and capability of the original ITK approach. It builds on the early work set out in ITK 1.1 and by adopting a modularised approach this new release now provides a stable foundation on which to develop additional capabilities to support future NHS business needs. By providing support for more complex interoperability scenarios it underpins clinical document exchange across organisational boundaries.

### The main enhancements in ITK R2 are:

- ITK R2 functional packages are now developed on and supported by the foundation 'ITK Core' providing a basis for future enhancements
- Expansion of CDA Correspondence package to include definitions for a number of key clinical document types including discharge summaries and A&E letters.
- Provision of support for documents in any format (Kettering XML, PDF, TIFF etc.)
- Incorporation of a Clinical Dashboards module
- Spine Mini Services provides a simplified access to the Personal Demographic Service (PDS) using ITK web services

### What can the ITK do for the NHS?

- Reduce the amount of money the NHS spends on local integration by standardising technology and interoperability specifications.
- Help the NHS realise business benefits by speeding up the development of integrated services.
- Provide a framework for innovative business solutions by defining a pervasive interoperability specification.
- Ease the development of local health community integrated systems.
- Lower the entry barrier to new systems developers

*"King's have implemented a number of bespoke interfaces with clinical systems in the past few years, and all have proved problematic with huge investment required both in terms of development, support and capital cost. This has led to delays, involved clinical risks, and long running disputes with vendors. Standardising interfaces would cut down implementation timescales and cost"*

**Clive Stringer, Deputy IT Director, King's College Hospital NHS Trust.**

*"By working with the early releases of the ITK, and the early adopting vendors, we will have been able to remove delays in communication to patients and their GP's when we go live this August. This approach to handling our half a million outbound letters per year has improved safety, and reduced costs. This embodies how simple interoperability can help glue a health system together with quick benefits for patients and efficiency."*

**Mark England, Director of Information Management and Technology  
Luton & Dunstable Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**



# Interoperability Toolkit

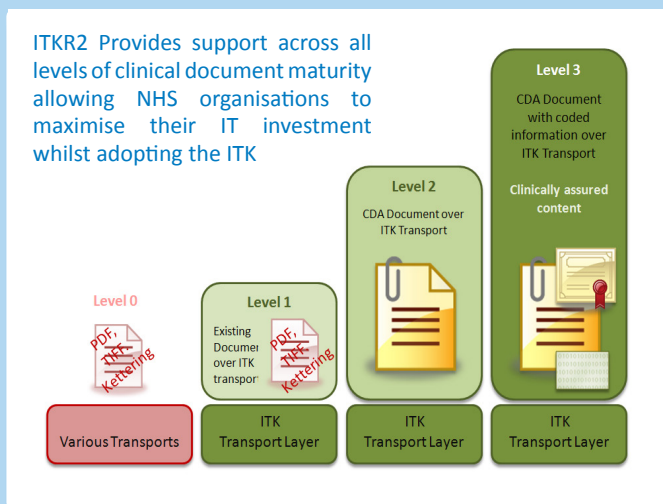
a set of national standards, frameworks and implementation guides to support interoperability



## Clinical Document Maturity

ITK R2 provides the opportunity to maximise local investment in existing systems and infrastructure by accommodating the transfer of simple text based documents. Crucially it also facilitates organisations to progress to a greater level of functional maturity by adopting a structured HL7 v3 CDA (Clinical Document Architecture) document type.

The Royal College of Physicians and Royal College of GPs have recently published new professional guidance on what information should go into an electronic discharge summary, in a bid to standardise these key documents. The Correspondence bundle within ITK R2 has been carefully designed to provide a simple and consistent technical platform for systems with a variety of current technical capabilities to adopt these professional standards.



## Why consider CDA?

ITK R2 provides a convenient mechanism for NHS organisations to move to and benefit from the use of CDA. The advantage of establishing a CDA based clinical document is that the complexity of a document can be matched to the complexity of the material to be carried within it.

This allows for a progression from the use of the very simple documents to those of a more complex nature when support for these is available. As such the ability to utilise a single approach to transfer a variety of document types.

As well as providing generic level CDA support, ITK R2 comes complete with five defined CDA templates for key clinical documents including discharge summaries, A&E letters, outpatient letters, out of hours and community reports. **ITK 2.0 has been constructed in such a way that adding additional correspondence types to future release of the ITK can now be achieved with minimal impact on the overall specifications.**

## Why is ITK useful for system vendors?

The lack of a standardised NHS approach to system interoperability has resulted in vendors and system developers having to invest significant time and effort in trying to interpret and optimise solutions based on standards such as HL7.

The flexibility of HL7 has meant that standardisation across the NHS has proved elusive. Often subtle variations in interpretation of the same version of an HL7 standard can leave different systems unable to work together. The result has been increasingly complex and expensive integration approaches.

ITK provides a solution to these integration challenges by defining a common interpretation of the base standards, like HL7, then proving that applications meet that definition through a accreditation programme.

This reduces the complexity of interfacing and frees up resources

## Benefits of ITK include:

The growing need to share clinical information across organisational boundaries means there is now a real benefit in using standards. ITK creates an opportunity to save time and cost in deploying new systems.

Currently interoperability challenges within the NHS tend to be tackled at the local level with each supplier and the local NHS IT teams developing system interfaces independently. This results in the need to hand craft mappings and bespoke interfaces at deployment time.

The ITK will help the NHS save both time and money by encouraging the development and testing interfaces that can be reused.

Further information on ITK and the new release can be found at:

[www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/itk](http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/itk)

Alternatively you can join the ITK related discussions on Health ICTPortal:

[www.healthictportal.com](http://www.healthictportal.com)

If you have any further questions or want to get involved with the ITK then please contact the team via:

[toolkit.enquiries@nhs.net](mailto:toolkit.enquiries@nhs.net)