

EAST OF ENGLAND RADIOTHERAPY NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT

**January 2024 -
March 2025**



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FOREWORD

Dr Thankamma Ajithkumar, Outgoing Clinical Lead, East of England Radiotherapy Network

It has been a privilege to serve as Clinical Lead for the East of England Radiotherapy Network over the past three years. As I step down from this role, I am proud of the progress we have made together in an increasingly challenging environment.

This annual report highlights the collaborative achievements of the network including the expansion of advanced techniques such as SABR, the successful pilot of a consultant mentorship programme, and continued development of standardised protocols. These all reflect a commitment to working as one team across organisational boundaries to improve care for our patients.

Despite workforce and capacity challenges, the network has remained focused on reducing unwarranted variation, improving access to innovation, and planning effectively for future demand. This has been possible thanks to the dedication, expertise, and goodwill of colleagues across the region.

The 2025/26 work programme continues to strengthen service delivery, clinical quality, and patient experience. I am confident that under the continued leadership of the Network Oversight Group and with the support of our talented workforce, the network will continue to go from strength to strength.



Introduction

This annual report provides an overview of the work and progress of the East of England Radiotherapy Network (EoE RTN) over the past year. It highlights key achievements, outlines the challenges faced, and sets out priorities for the year ahead. The report reflects the collective efforts of our network teams to reduce variation, improve access to advanced treatment techniques, and plan services to meet rising demand. It also acknowledges the commitment and resilience of the radiotherapy workforce, whose dedication continues to drive the delivery of high-quality patient care across the region.

RADIOTHERAPY HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 2024 - MARCH 2025



15,353 episodes of radiotherapy delivered representing 8.4% of all episodes delivered in England during this period



177,209 attendances of radiotherapy accounting for 8.5% of the national total



15 of 30 workplan objectives achieved; 7 partially achieved; 7 carried forward to 25/26; and 1 not carried forward



- **9/16 generic indicators of a well functioning network met; 1 in progress; 5 to be addressed**
- **Network Outcomes & Service User Experience measured**
- **2025/ 2026 Annual Work Programme agreed**

SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The achievements of the EofE RTN are summarised here. There have been other successes as we work towards reducing unwarranted variation, improving access to advanced treatment techniques, and planning and managing capacity and demand.

AI Auto-Contouring (M-Vision)

- Continuing multi-site pilot of M-Vision, an auto-contouring tool which provides support for the planning part of the radiotherapy pathway.
- Funding for the pilot is currently secured until March 2026.

Workforce Development

- Delivered regional outreach campaigns and open-day events.
- Developed a career promotion toolkit for each department including banners, and profession specific careers leaflets.
- Created return-to-practice frameworks for Therapeutic Radiographers and Medical Physics.

Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy (SABR) Expansion

- Consultant SABR Mentorship Programme launched.
- Weekly SABR MDT continues, with educational sessions delivered as part of the meetings.
- Spine SABR implemented at Southend Hospital.

SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Standardised Protocols

- Fourteen tumour-site network-wide protocols developed and agreed.
- Annual review process agreed.

Equipment Replacement Strategy

- Developed and agreed an Equipment Replacement Plan for 2025 - 2030, outlining radiotherapy equipment and infrastructure needs across the region.
- Plan presented to Joint Commissioning Committee to ensure ICBs aware of the multi-year capital planning requirements.

Regional/ National Collaboration

- EofE RTN Study Day Unified Care, United Workforce' held February 2024.
- Developed a virtual reality 'Get into Radiotherapy Careers' experience in collaboration with North East and Yorkshire & Humber Radiotherapy Networks.
- Network Consultant Radiographer Group established.
- Ongoing ProKnow uploads to national audit collections.
- Continued attendance at regional and national meetings.
- Sharing best practice for efficient patient pathways.

SUMMARY OF KEY CHALLENGES

The key challenges facing the EofE RTN are summarised in 3 categories.

Workforce Shortages

Workforce shortages remain the main barrier to meeting with CWTs and progressing network initiatives. Unfilled vacancies, national recruitment difficulties, and staff sickness continue to impact all areas of the RT workforce. Many network activities rely on staff contributing beyond their core duties, which adds further pressure. While this remains a national challenge, the EofE RTN continues to work closely with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and national partners to advocate for sustainable workforce solutions.

Capacity

Rising referral volumes and increasing case complexity, alongside ongoing workforce shortages, have placed significant pressure on departmental capacity. Clinical workload rightly remains the priority, which has limited the time available for progressing some network projects. As a result, elements of the 2024/25 work programme have been delayed and will either be carried forward to 2025/26 or reprioritised as the network's focus evolves.

Funding

Limited network funding means number of roles within the network remain small. This means it can be challenging to support the delivery of projects and has resulted in the paring back of the 2025/2026 work programme.

LOOKING AHEAD

2025/ 2026

Over the coming year, our focus will be to support compliance with national Cancer Waiting Time standards. The 2025/ 2026 work programme is aligned to 6 priorities.

Support compliance with national CWT standards

- Understand if RT capacity is adequate.
- Ensure equipment is utilised effectively.
- Support staff to develop their fulfil potential and improve staff retention.
- Improve CWTs.

Create a 'one team' culture

- Establish a well set up, well functioning network.
- Deliver an annual work programme.
- Publish annual report or 2024/ 2025.
- Develop network website.

Improve access to advanced RT techniques

- Support provision of SABR across the network.
- Understand molecular RT service provision.
- Understand brachytherapy service provision.
- Effectively utilise M-Vision across the network.

LOOKING AHEAD

2025/ 2026

Reduce variation in quality

- Effectively utilise ProKnow audit across the network.
- Governance structure in place for protocols/ body site groups.
- Network protocols in place.
- Undertake network wide peer review for rare tumours/ where single-handed practice exists.

Increase participation in RT clinical trials

- Increase recruitment to RT clinical trials by:
 - Establishing governance and reporting structures.
 - Raising awareness of clinical trials among patients and staff.
 - Developing a network structure for delivery of RT clinical trials for less common cancers.

Improve the experience of care of Service Users

- Plan development of network patient information where appropriate.
- Utilise national RT patient experience survey to implement improvements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the work of the East of England Radiotherapy Network over the past year.

Special thanks go to Dr Ashley Shaw, who stepped down as Chair of the Network, for his leadership and guidance, and to Dr Sarah Jefferies, our Deputy Chair, for her continued support and contributions. We also acknowledge Dr Thankamma Ajithkumar for his valuable service as outgoing Clinical Lead, and Dr Alex Martin for his continued role as SABR Clinical Lead.

We are grateful to all members of the Network Oversight Group (NOG) for their strategic input, steering, and oversight, as well as to the Body Site Group Chairs and all group members for their commitment and expertise throughout the year.

Finally, we would like to thank the entire radiotherapy workforce across the region for their hard work, professionalism, and dedication in delivering excellent care to patients, often under challenging circumstances.