

Stakeholder briefing

Planned care waiting list management

25th November 2022

Summary

In Greater Manchester (GM) there are approximately 535,000 people waiting for planned hospital care, also known as elective care. We continue to focus on reducing the backlogs as we enter the busy winter period. GM was one of the areas hardest hit by COVID-19 and this has impacted the speed of our recovery.

The next significant milestone within the [national elective recovery plan](#) is for the NHS to eliminate waits of over 18 months by end March 2023.

Local hospitals are continuing to work together towards this milestone by providing mutual aid to enable people to be treated where capacity is available, including within the independent sector. The expansion of surgical hubs in GM will also support our efforts to treat people who have waited the longest, more on this below.

Our GM website [While You wait](http://whileyouwait.org.uk) [whileyouwait.org.uk] is designed to support people while they wait for hospital care and it answers some common questions, such as how waiting lists are prioritised. We have now launched three new sections for people waiting to have treatment under Orthopaedics, Gastroenterology and Children's services.

Introduction

This briefing is designed to update stakeholders in GM on the NHS waiting list backlog, the work we are doing to address it and supporting people while they wait. There have been four previous stakeholder briefings, the last in August 2022.

In this briefing you will find:

1. Current position
2. GM wide initiatives
 - Working to address health inequalities
 - Expansion of surgical hubs
 - While You Wait – supporting people on the waiting list
 - Electronic eyecare referral system
3. GM locality and hospital initiatives
 - Super September
 - State of the art theatres being built at Royal Bolton Hospital
4. North West regional recovery bulletin
5. Further information

1. Current position

The number of people on the total waiting list is increasing and currently stands at approximately 535,000 (November 2022). The three specialties with the longest waiting lists are Gynaecology, Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) and Trauma and Orthopaedics. GM was one of the areas hardest hit by COVID-19 and this has impacted on our speed of recovery

Reducing the number of people waiting for planned treatment continues to be a key focus for us in GM. The NHS and partners across the region are working together to treat people as quickly as possible.

2. GM wide initiatives

Working to address health inequalities

Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society. They lead to disparate outcomes, varied access to services, and poor experiences of care.

Addressing health inequalities is a key focus for us in GM as we look to manage waiting list backlogs and treat people as quickly as possible.

Within the GM Elective Recovery and Reform Programme, working with NHS providers across the region, we have completed Equality Impact Assessments on key pieces of work. This process enables us to identify any potential and known inequalities in terms of experience of, and access to, planned hospital services. This is not only necessary to ensure that we are meeting our legal requirements within the Public Sector Equality Duty but to ensure that we can successfully tackle the waiting list backlogs.

A priority for us will be to look at how we can 'poverty proof' services linked to the impact of the Cost of Living crisis on huge numbers of people living in GM, for example by actively promoting support to get to hospital appointments. Poverty, which is experienced disproportionately by many communities who already have worse health outcomes, such as disabled people has the potential to lead to exacerbation of existing inequalities.

Expansion of surgical hubs

Four hospitals in Greater Manchester will receive funding to expand their services and treat more people.

Surgical hubs are one of the initiatives being used to manage planned care waiting list backlogs. Located on existing hospital sites, surgical hubs bring together skills and expertise of staff under one roof. They will focus mainly on providing high volume low complexity surgery and will help to reduce waiting times for some of the most common procedures.

The additional funding will be used to increase theatre and diagnostic services at Rochdale Infirmary, Leigh Infirmary and Trafford General Hospital. This will create new jobs and enable more procedures to be undertaken. The Christie NHS Foundation Trust has also received funding to increase ward capacity for patients across Greater Manchester requiring complex cancer surgery.

Patients in Greater Manchester are already benefitting from treatment at surgical hubs for Orthopaedics and Children’s surgery. Over 1000 patients in Greater Manchester have been treated at local Orthopaedic surgical hubs.

While You Wait – supporting people on the waiting list

[While You Wait](http://whileyouwait.org.uk) [whileyouwait.org.uk] is a resource designed to support people to look after their physical and mental wellbeing while they wait for care and treatment. The site has an accessibility toolbar which enables visitors to translate the content into over 100 languages, text to speech functionality, reading aids and styling options.

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section includes an explanation of how patients on the waiting list are prioritised.

We have launched three new sections aimed at people waiting for appointments, diagnostic procedures or operations under the following specialties: Orthopaedics, Gastroenterology and Children’s surgery.

Orthopaedics	Gastroenterology	Children’s surgery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First outpatient • Pre-operative assessment • Surgical hubs approach • Knee replacement • Knee ligament • Knee arthroscopy • Hip replacement • Shoulder replacement • carpal tunnel • MyRecovery App • Further information and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First outpatient • Gastroscopy • Colonoscopy • Flexible sigmoidoscopy • CT Colonoscopy • FibroScan • Further information and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The little orange book – managing common childhood illnesses • Managing pain • Sepsis • Mental health support • Preparing your child for admission, including useful resources • Children’s dental surgery • Children’s urology • Further information and support

If you’ve visited While You Wait at any point over the last 12 months we would like your feedback to help us improve the website. We’d also like to understand how we can best support people while they are on the waiting list.

[Click here](#) to complete our short survey that will only take a few minutes to complete.

Electronic eyecare referral service

An enhanced Electronic Eyecare Referral System is helping improve eye care in Greater Manchester. Introduced in February 2022, the system has a new functionality

that enables Primary Care Optometrists to send high resolution photos to Ophthalmologists at the hospital to aid in diagnosis, advice, and guidance.

Optometrists are the frontline of eye care; they examine eyes for defects or abnormalities and if necessary, refer patients to hospital to see a specialist for treatment. Now, using the Elective Eyecare Referral System Optometrists can upload a picture of the eye and seek advice on how best to manage a patient's condition.

The system is helping to reduce patient waiting times and unnecessary hospital appointments. Where possible, Optometrists are given advice from Ophthalmologist's on how to manage the patient within a primary care setting opposed to arranging an unnecessary referral. Changing practice will result in creating additional capacity to see and treat patients who require specialist hospital care.

In Greater Manchester over 25,000 referrals have been made since February, which is a huge achievement. The system has been positively welcomed by Optometrists in GM who in a recent survey praised the ease and efficiency in which they are able to obtain specialist advice and improve the patient experience.

One example given was a referral made via the system to the Royal Manchester Eye Hospital at 10.30am, the patient's information was quickly reviewed and due to the urgent nature of the patient's condition an operation was facilitated by 1pm the same day. The new electronic system enabled the referral to be facilitated quickly which resulted in a 43-year-old patient receiving immediate life changing surgery.

3. GM locality and hospital initiatives

Super September

The transformation of outpatient services is a key part of the Greater Manchester (GM) Elective Recovery and Reform Strategy. Three GM Trusts are taking part in the national outpatient transformation initiative 'Super September'.

Between the end of October and end of November, Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust will increase their capacity to be able to see people whose follow up appointment is overdue.

Salford Care Organisation, part of the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust will increase their capacity to offer more first outpatient appointments in the following specialties: Urology, General and Colorectal Surgery, Medicine, Ophthalmology, Rheumatology, Spine.

Bolton NHS Foundation Trust are looking at first outpatient appointments and follow up appointments. They will pilot two initiatives to help manage new referrals into the Trust, a Chatbot which supports communication with patients to ensure the waiting list is accurate and up to date and a virtual activity platform in Dermatology. In terms of follow up appointments, they will introduce Patient Initiated Follow Ups (PIFU) in the following specialties: Cardiology, Respiratory, General Surgery and Bladder and Bowel services.

Learning from these initiatives will be shared and working together in GM we will ensure any successful initiatives are rolled out to help us manage waiting lists backlogs in the region.

State-of-the-art theatres being built at Royal Bolton hospital

[Two new theatres are being built at Royal Bolton Hospital](#) in a multi-million-pound investment into healthcare in Bolton and Greater Manchester. Expected to be up and running by April 2023, the additional theatres will improve patient experience and help the trust clear the number of patients waiting for surgery.

4. North West regional recovery bulletin

The North West regional communications team has published the latest recovery bulletin which details the work being done to recover services. [Read it here](#).

5. Further information

For any further information, please contact Vicky Sharrock, Programme Director GM Elective Care Recovery and Reform Programme, Vicky.Sharrock@mft.nhs.uk.