



Cheshire and Merseyside

Our Ref: CM700

Date: 13th September 2022

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Private & Confidential

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
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Please direct any queries to:
Patient Experience Team
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Dear Sir George,

Further to our letter of acknowledgment dated the 17th August 2022, I am now in a position to respond to your request for an update on waiting times for joint replacement surgery.



Specifically, you have asked how joint replacement surgery waiting times are being tackled as part of local elective recovery planning; ensuring that pre-operative, operative and post-operative care are remaining seamlessly integrated, regardless of where these services are provided, and how people are being supported to wait well. In addition, you have asked how people are being supported to wait well and what transport arrangements and financial support is available for people who may access surgical procedures outside of their local area.

I have outlined below some of the key areas of work that will hopefully provide you with assurances that this cohort of patients is a priority.

Risk stratification of waiting lists in Cheshire and Merseyside

The Cheshire and Merseyside elective recovery programme team have been working closely with trusts to review patients waiting for surgery. We have been working with

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a company called C2Ai to develop and embed a risk stratification tool within the hospital waiting lists which supports very detailed prioritisation of patients on our surgical waiting lists. The C2Ai tool is an algorithm which reviews individual patient health profiles along with the type of surgery they are waiting for, to give an estimate of the risk of complications during or after their surgery. The patient profile includes any illnesses or conditions that a patient may have which could increase their risk, and we know that each surgical procedure has its own level of risk associated with it, depending on its complexity. This helps us to prioritise the most urgent patients by bringing them in for surgery sooner. The tool can identify the most likely complication that a particular patient may have after surgery which enables the surgical team to take steps to reduce the risk of that happening; or be ready with expert treatment if it does. We have used this to support initiatives aimed at helping patients while waiting and optimising them for their surgery.

Joint replacement surgery is one of our largest cohorts on the waiting lists, so we have undertaken detailed work with the orthopaedic teams to support clinical pathway review, identifying additional capacity in the independent sector to increase the volumes of surgery we can offer, and working with our musculoskeletal (MSK) specialist physiotherapy teams to support rehabilitation for these patients. Hospitals are working together to offer additional theatre sessions where possible, and we are about to open an elective surgical hub on the Clatterbridge site that will be focussed on orthopaedic surgery. Not all joint replacement patients can be treated in the elective hubs, but this will release capacity in the acute hospital sites if we can move out the less complex cases.

Perioperative wellbeing patient coaching

The Cheshire and Merseyside elective recovery team have also been piloting a digital app called Sapien, which supports patients preparing for their surgery and for up to 4 weeks afterwards. The service provides access to virtual and in-person support covering areas of health and wellbeing, including exercise, healthy eating, sleep, and mental wellbeing. We recognise that some patients will have deteriorated while waiting, so this initiative is aimed at helping to optimise them ready to get the best outcome from their surgery. We have used the C2-Ai risk stratification tool to identify patients at risk of complications that can potentially be reduced through this kind of support. Patients who take part in surgical preparation programs like Sapien have been shown to have a lower risk of complications and can return to normal activities sooner after their surgery.

Once identified these patients are contacted via text message by Sapien to go through the offer with patients who can decide if this approach is for them. If the patient feels this is suitable, Sapien Health support them with the sign-up process and provide the digital app.

Those that sign up will get access to:

- One to One health coaching from a professional coach to empower and support people on their surgical journey.
- A personalised programme that is created for each individual based on their health goals - diet, activity, sleep, alcohol moderation, and more.
- On demand content that includes bite-sized lessons, exercise videos, mindfulness techniques, meal plans, and more to help strengthen body and mind.
- Insightful health metrics that will uncover actionable insights and get coach feedback by tracking sleep, activity, steps, and other health metrics.

St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospital NHS Trust are the first to trial the service and are focussing on patients that have a date for surgery and are at potentially higher risk of chest infection complication as flagged by the C2-Ai risk stratification tool. As part of the programme Sapien Health will provide spirometers as part of the breathing exercises and health coaching to try and reduce the risk of the infections and improve the recovery for those patients. The Academic Health Sciences team are evaluating this work to review the impact before we take a decision about wider roll-out.

Living well

Cheshire and Merseyside Musculoskeletal (MSK) team and local leads are working on a suite of initiatives to support patients to live well whilst tackling the challenge of the elective waiting times. For example: -

- 'Best MSK Program': Identify opportunities to reduce unwarranted variation in access, outcomes, and patient experience, with a specific focus on Osteoarthritis Hip and knee, Rheumatology and Cauda equina syndrome pathways, as well as referral optimisation. The team have already started to look at pathway mapping and where the opportunities for further personalised

care and digital solutions to support the population we serve along the MSK pathway.

- The 'Escape Pain' program – access to this program is variable across the footprint. The team will be looking at how the offer can be enhanced.
- Patient initiated follow up (PIFU) – The ability for a patient to access follow ups when required is currently being rolled out across a number of specialties. This service will not be appropriate for everyone but will be built into a personalised approach for the appropriate cohort of people that will result in getting the right care and advice at a time that they need it.
- Shared decision making, solution focused discussions: If a patient is referred from an MSK interface service – a shared decision and solution focused conversation takes place – this includes discussion regarding exercises to maintain current levels of function and how this may be achieved. Further support by exercise programs that are either paper or digital that does have a communication loop back if people need support.

Additionally, there are a number of service level offers that support patients to access the right care at the right time, including access to exercise videos, proactive engagement of patients to ensure exercise programs are appropriate, weight management program, social prescribing (including mindfulness, support groups, finance management etc).

With regards to transport assistance, the West Midlands Ambulance Service provides a non-emergency Patient Transport Service for people in the Cheshire, Warrington and Wirral area who may need special support getting to and from their healthcare appointments. Further details regarding the eligibility criteria and booking arrangements are available at <https://wmaspts.wmas.nhs.uk/our-contracts/cheshire-warrington-and-the-wirral-for-patients/>

For patients in the Merseyside area, this service is provided by the North West Ambulance Service. Further details are publicly available at <https://www.nwas.nhs.uk/services/patient-transport-service-pts/about/> .

Patients who require financial support for transport costs, may be eligible under the NHS Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS). The scheme is available to people

who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. Further information regarding this scheme is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs/healthcare-travel-costs-scheme-htcs/> .

I do hope that my letter fully addresses the points you have raised. Should you have any additional questions regarding this enquiry, please contact the Patient Experience Team who will be happy to assist.

Yours sincerely



Graham Urwin
Chief Executive
NHS Cheshire and Merseyside