ACCESSIBLE CARE FOR OUR PATIENTS

Our patients have been waiting too long for planned surgery and outpatient treatment. A major project has taken place to ensure we have a clear picture of the issues, and a plan in place to ensure all of our patients receive high-quality, accessible care.

Background

We announced back in early 2014 that we had introduced a new reporting system which had identified several operational issues with our Referral to Treatment (RTT) reporting, dating back several years.

RTT is a national guidance which states that patients should receive hospital treatment within 18 weeks of having been referred by their GP.

Once the issues with our systems came to light, we carried out a thorough exercise, checking the data to make sure we were confident with our figures. This is called validation. We suspended reporting of our RTT performance while that took place.

What’s the problem?

The validation work showed that thousands of people had been waiting too long to be seen.

A long-standing mismatch of capacity and demand, coupled with the issues with reporting our performance, meant that a significant backlog had built up.

We shared this situation with our local partners and you, our stakeholders.

We have significantly reduced the number of patients who have been waiting, but still have a long way to go.
How will we fix it?

While the validation exercise was underway, we introduced thousands of extra clinics so that we could immediately begin to see and treat the people who had been waiting too long.

We initially focused on those waiting for surgery, and then moved on to those who had been referred for outpatient care.

This year we will have provided 520,000 outpatient appointments – 25,000 more than last year.

We have put in place a robust recovery and improvement plan, supported by the NHS Trust Development Authority and NHS England.

Assuming that we achieve the milestones set out in that plan, we will be compliant with the national Referral to Treatment standard by the end of 2016/17.

The key focus of our work is to treat those who have been waiting too long as quickly as possible, to assure ourselves that they have not come to any harm as a result of that wait, and to ensure that we put sustainable systems in place so this situation does not arise again.

We need to ensure that we have the capacity to meet the demand on our services.

That means providing additional appointments, carrying out more operations and employing more specialist staff.

We will also be carrying out more investigations – MRIs, CT scans, ultrasounds and endoscopies.

We will be using other measures so that our services run as smoothly as possible, and that includes reducing the number of people who don’t show up for their appointments.

Throughout this project we have been supported by our partners, and are working with our Clinical Commissioning Groups to look at how we could move care into more appropriate settings.

We are also considering how we manage GP referrals.

What happens next?

Our recovery and improvement plan - setting out the detail of the work taking place - will be shared at a public board meeting, and made available on our website.

As we now have far more confidence in the quality of our data, we aim to resume reporting of our performance as soon as possible.

We will keep you fully updated about the improvements we are making, and the reduction in our waiting lists.

Working with our patients

We are working closely with patient group Healthwatch Havering and Havering Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Chairs Anne-Marie Dean and Cllr Nic Dodin said: “We want to ensure that patients receive the best possible care, so are carrying out a review of delays in treatment.

“The Trust is happy to work with us on this, and we welcome their openness and transparency.”

To find out more

- NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) has a [Guide to NHS waiting times](http://www.nhs.uk)

- NHS England has published [Consultant-led Referral to Treatment Waiting Times Rules and Guidance](http://www.nhs.uk)