

NHS Waiting Times

Experiences of waiting for care/treatment
summary report

November 2021



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Experience of waiting for NHS care/treatment in Derby & Derbyshire

Who did we hear from?



Healthwatch England heard from **124 people** across Derbyshire (108) and Derby City (16) about their experience of waiting for care/treatment

93 people were still waiting for care/treatment at the time of completing the survey. The views reflected in this report are those of the 93 people still waiting.

How long are people waiting?

WAITING ROOM



0-2 Months	3-4 Months	5-6 Months	7 -12 month	Over 1 year	2 years +	Don't know
9	12	17	19	2	23	11

What are people waiting for?



Operation	Consultation (Outpatients, no procedure or intervention)	Consultation with Surgeon	Ongoing treatment (e.g. pre planned review of Long Term Condition)	Rehabilitation	Other
49	21	1	10	2	10

Have people had their treatment cancelled at any point?



No	Yes, once	Yes, more than once	Don't know	Other
62	11	7	11	2



What is waiting for care like?

While the overall length of time spent on lists and the certainty that a procedure will go ahead are key to people's experience, they are not the only factors that affect what it's like waiting for care and their quality of life.

Communication

Many people told Healthwatch that the amount of supporting information they were given while waiting for care was inadequate, especially in helping them manage their condition.

In this self-selecting survey (likely to have a higher proportion of respondents with a negative experience), 53% said they received no information at all. A further 33% said, *the information the NHS provided them with was not good enough.*

"All I have received is a letter from the hospital to say I have been referred and they will contact me for an appointment. This was eight months ago. I have heard nothing since. It would be good to know how long the waiting list is and more about my condition. I have not been given any advice about how to manage my condition whilst I wait and what I should or should not be doing. Without knowing how long I need to wait how do I know there has not been an admin error and I have been forgotten?"

Interim support services

People were asked if they had received any more practical interim support, such as pain relief, physiotherapy or mental health support, whilst they waited for their hospital treatment.

Just 14% of those we surveyed said they had received some support, with 86% saying they didn't receive any help at all. Not everyone surveyed will have needed support, but this is still surprisingly high. Where people face long waits, it is precisely this interim support that can make the experience bearable.



"I appreciate the pandemic has affected many operations taking place but I cannot understand how and why telephone/video appointments like mine should be affected. The idea that there is only one mental health consultant available to help someone in crisis is ridiculous, but that is what I was told."

Interim support also helps keep patients well and gets them ready for surgery. Without it, people's health can deteriorate significantly which has a devastating impact on patients and will cost the health and social care system in the long run.



"I am no nearer hearing when this operation will take place. The pain is now so bad that I have had to give up my job. I also have carer duties which are hard given my health. My mobility has deteriorated to such an extent that I struggle to walk. Two years ago when I was referred for the operation, I was asked to try to lose some weight. However, as time goes on and as my mobility gets worse this is proving impossible. I can now barely move and the pain is horrendous. I am putting on weight rather than losing it and the wait is making matters worse."

Quality of life

People were asked: To what extent did they agree that a delay to their treatment had impacted certain aspects of their life?

71% said that it had negatively impacted their mental health

A further 71% stated that they experienced increased levels of pain



"I have been prescribed Codeine to help deal with pain I am experiencing and am concerned regarding becoming addicted."

"I am becoming extremely concerned about my mental health and the delay for an operation that is having a negative impact on myself and life ... My current life is I rarely venture out, my children visit weekly, I have help with housework, gardening and general activities ... waiting for my op I am unable to do hardly anything which for me is not a life."

"The level of pain I have is impacting every single area of my life. I am suicidal due to the level of pain and the way it impacts on my daily life and relationships. I am on huge amounts of opiate medication but as I have nerve pain the opiates have little effect. My only chance to be pain free is the spinal cord stimulator. Whilst waiting for the treatment I am engaging in every other type of therapy offered along with complementary therapies and talking therapies. I have also lost weight as advised. I neither drink nor smoke, I am doing literally everything I can to be pain free."



Where our data comes from

The views reported above come from Derby & Derbyshire respondents to Healthwatch England's national survey, promoted by Healthwatch Derbyshire, which ran between 6 September and 11 October 2021 and supports the recommendations of the report. Healthwatch England's report and recommendations can be found here: <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2021-11-08/waiting-lists-are-inevitable-its-how-we-manage-them-matters>



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