

Waiting Lists

We have plans to massively improve on our current offer to improve patient understanding of waiting times. Currently patients are added to waiting lists and then can sometimes hear nothing for months.

From April patients that are added to our elective waiting list or our outpatient waiting list for a first appointment will receive a letter (copied to the GP) to confirm that they are being added to the waiting list and giving them an idea of how long they may have to wait.

For the patients added to the elective waiting list their time band will be based on their P code on listing. We are advising P2 patients that they should hear from Admissions within 4- 8 weeks, P3s we are saying 3 – 6 months, and for P4s we are advising that many specialities currently have waiting lists in excess of 9 months.

For outpatients/non-admitted, patients are being advised of the current average wait for that speciality for a first appointment.

In both cases the letter advises that we will see them sooner than advised if we can e.g. if we are able to put on additional capacity.

All of the above is currently being tested, for outpatients we are starting with acute services but are looking to expand this to community services (that use Rio) as the next stage.

Alongside the above there are a couple of other things:

- My Planned Care is a national programme that will (from April) provide patients with average waiting times for their speciality on a webpage. We have concerns about the waiting times that will be shown as they will be unrealistic for the more complex patients or those waiting for specific surgeons, so could set unrealistic expectations, but we hope that the information we are providing will provide a more useful layer for our patients and we will be focussing on this
- Our safety netting processes ensure that patients who have waited 52 weeks or more and have nothing booked are contacted to check on their condition and to ensure they know they are still on a list – and this will be repeated every 3 months

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust