

WAITING TIMES FOR ELECTIVE (PLANNED) SERVICES FOR PATIENTS AUGUST 2013

INTRODUCTION

This document describes the standards that Chelsea and Westminster Hospital aims to achieve in terms of waiting times for an appointment or admission, for all patients who wish to access elective (planned) services at the hospital. Most patients will be referred to the hospital by their GP but these standards also apply to patients who are referred from another hospital or by another health professional.

This document **does not** cover access to emergency services (for example, waiting times in the A&E department), to sexual health services (for example, 48 hour access to a sexual health clinic appointment), or to our community based clinics such as the Child Development Service or Community Gynaecology/Dermatology clinics (where waiting times are agreed with local GPs).

AIMS

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital want to offer you an appointment or admission date that:

- Is in line with the clinical urgency of your condition
- Is convenient for you, with enough notice so you can make arrangements to attend, but without unnecessarily extending your waiting time
- Gives you a choice of dates wherever possible
- Makes reasonable allowance for changes once you have agreed the appointment, but without wasting NHS resources

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM US?

Overall, we aim to offer you treatment, or if appropriate a different but definite outcome such as a decision made with your doctor to monitor your condition before treatment, **within 18 weeks** of you being referred to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. If your condition is more complicated it may be necessary for us to undertake more clinical investigations or reviews. In this case, you may not be treated within 18 weeks but we will always aim to minimise the time you need to wait for treatment. We will always prioritise patients first based on their clinical urgency.

We want to minimise the time you wait for each stage of your care with Chelsea and Westminster Hospital:

- We aim to offer all patients who are referred to us their first outpatient appointment within **6 weeks** of us receiving the referral.
- We aim to offer all patients who need a diagnostic test a date for this within **6 weeks** of it being requested.
- We aim to offer all patients who need an admission for treatment a date for this within **6 weeks** of being added to the waiting list.

We will offer you wherever possible **a choice of 2 different dates** for any appointment or admission, and we will give you 3 weeks' notice of the dates. If we have an earlier date available we will offer you this, and you may agree to it, but if not we will still offer you a further 2 dates.

We will always endeavour to **minimise cancellations** of appointments or admissions by the hospital, but sometimes this is necessary due to unforeseen circumstances (for example, if a doctor is sick) or clinical emergencies (for example, an emergency operation). We aim never to cancel your appointment or admission more than once.

WHAT DO WE EXPECT FROM YOU?

When you are referred to the hospital, **we expect you to be available** for an appointment within the next 6 weeks. If you cannot accept any of the choices of dates we offer you then we will ask you to return to your GP (or other referrer) when you are ready to be seen at the hospital, and ask them to re-refer you. This is so that other patients may be seen in a timely way. Similarly, if you are added to the waiting list, we expect you to be available and willing to have your admission (operation or treatment) within 6 weeks. If you are not able to do this, we will remove you from the waiting list and ask you to return to your GP (or other referrer) when you are ready for your operation/treatment, and ask them to re-refer you.

If you need to change an appointment or admission date that you have agreed with us, we will be able to do this **only once** for a patient related medical reason (for example, you or your child is unwell), and once for a patient related social reason (for example, you have found you have other commitments on the date you agreed). We expect you to attend on the rescheduled date. If you are unable to do so, we will ask you to return to your GP (or other referrer) and discuss another referral to us.

If you do not attend an agreed appointment or admission date without prior (24 hours) notice you will be returned to the care of your GP (or other referrer) and you will need to ask them to re-refer you if you would like another appointment. Should you be running late for an appointment or admission, we ask that you contact the department and let them know as soon as possible. If you do not do this, you may be considered not to have attended.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

The national standards for access to elective (planned) hospital services are that 95% of patients should be treated within 18 weeks where the treatment is in outpatients, and 90% of patients should be treated within 18 weeks where the treatment is during an admission. The standards are not 100% because it is recognised that there are clinically complicated conditions that need more time to be investigated and treated, and because there are variations in the demand from patients for different services which mean that sometimes waiting times will be slightly longer.

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital has consistently met these standards since they were introduced. We still want to do more, as we do not always offer patients a date for each appointment, test or admission within 6 weeks. This is what we are currently working to monitor and improve.

REVIEW AND PUBLICATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

We have reviewed our patient waiting time standards (this document) with our Council of Governors, who are elected members of our Foundation Trust responsible for representing patients' interests. The document will be reviewed annually in line with our internal Access Policy which sets out our operational processes for achieving the standards we have set.

This document will be available on our website and sent out on request. Should you have any questions about this document or your care at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) service (020 3315 6727/pals@chelwest.nhs.uk).