

Ref: FOI/2023/8975

Date Received: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Response Due: 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

You asked:

**I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request information from Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust.**

**Information requested:**

**1. What has the Trust done to reduce the NHS waiting list in all areas?**

For the purposes of responding, it is assumed that the definition of “waiting lists” in the question.

- refers to patients awaiting admission for treatment that has been arranged in advance (elective care), including those for cancer and diagnostic tests.
- is not an emergency admission.

The response also refers to national targets in relation to waiting lists that have been mandated in 2023/24 by NHS England for all acute care provider Trusts, as well as standards contained within the NHS Constitution.

The Trust continues to reduce waiting lists for elective care that have built up as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is not limited simply to maximising the number of patients we see as soon as possible but uses national guidance to prioritise seeing patients based on a balance of length of wait, level of acuity, risk of deterioration and using all available capacity. The Trust has taken a pro-active approach to this and planned to reducing waits in advance of national targets being announced, which has enabled us to meet these to date. We have now eliminated the longest waits (those waiting over 104 weeks, and those waiting over 78 weeks), and for 2023/24 we aim to eliminate waits of over 65 weeks in line with national targets, except where patients choose to wait longer.

To achieve this, the Trust continues to increase its productivity within operating theatres, benchmarking against other NHS acute providers to identify opportunities for increased efficiencies in our processes and procedures, as well as improvements in quality. Further, we have actively worked to harness external funding opportunities where they exist to increase our elective capacity. Through such approaches, we have been able to:

- re-commission a mothballed theatre on our Wrightington site
- remodel parts of our estate to create additional capacity.
- build a new elective theatre at Leigh Infirmary (set to open in November), and
- submit a bid for another elective theatre for trauma and orthopaedics at Wrightington.

Part of the Trust's capacity to reduce elective waiting lists is dependent on us being able to maintain a good flow of patients through the hospital, enabling safe and timely discharge of patients following a period of inpatient care, therefore capacity in the wider care 'system' is a fundamental part of this. With this in mind, we are continuing to work with our system partners, particularly the local council, in relation to ensuring there is sufficient care and support available for people who need it, thus permitting timely discharge from a hospital bed.

There are also a range of initiatives being delivered within the Trust to support increased capacity. As part of a transformational programme of work, these include:

- Increasing our virtual ward capacity from 95 beds currently to 150 beds. Virtual wards, also known as 'hospital at home', allow patients to get the care they need at home safely and conveniently, rather than being in hospital.
- Reducing the number of unnecessary outpatient appointments, or shifting to virtual outpatient appointments, making better use of clinicians' time.
- Increasing our provision of same day emergency care, providing urgent assessment, diagnosis and treatment, without the need for the patient to be admitted to hospital.
- The additional theatre at Leigh Infirmary will provide an increase in the range of elective procedures that can be undertaken on the site from November 2023 and improve theatre utilisation on the site.

In relation to cancer care, the Trust is a member of the Greater Manchester (GM) Cancer Alliance, which brings together clinical and operational leaders from different Trusts to maximise our collective resources and enable care to be planned more effectively across pathways of care. This means that we work in collaboration with other Trusts across GM to help people get diagnosed earlier and to provide better treatment. Within the Trust specifically, a new theatre at Leigh Infirmary will provide additional capacity for breast cancer services.

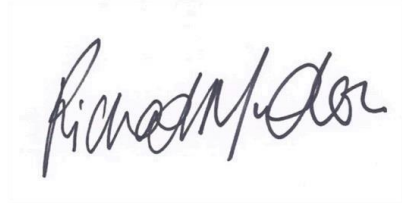
The Trust is meeting the NHS Constitutional Standard of a maximum 2-month (62-day) wait from urgent referral for suspected cancer to first treatment for all cancers, and we forecast to meet the cancer faster diagnosis standard (patients receiving confirmation of a diagnosis of cancer or a ruling out of cancer with 28 days of referral) by March 2024.

In addition to our work around improving waits for cancer diagnoses, the Trust is forecasting to deliver 20% more diagnostic tests across all other diagnostic services when compared to pre-pandemic (2019/20) levels. This is due in large part to our increased investment in these services, which will be further enhanced by the opening of a Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) on the Leigh Infirmary site in November 2023. The additional diagnostic capacity provided by the CDC will enable the Trust to deliver the NHS Constitutional Standard of 95% of patients waiting for a diagnostic test being seen within six weeks.

If you are not entirely satisfied with this response, please do not hesitate to contact the Information Governance Department via the email address provided. If we do not hear from you within 40 days, we

will assume that we have been able to accommodate your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Mundon', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Richard Mundon  
Director of Strategy and Planning

**PLEASE NOTE:**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to: Information Governance Department, Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust, Suite 9, Buckingham Row, Brick Kiln Lane, Wigan, WN1 1XX.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Helpline number: 0303 123 111