

# GIBRALTAR HEALTH AUTHORITY



**Strategies to reduce waiting times for urgent and elective care**

**August 2023**

## GHA Waiting List Strategy

This strategy outlines a framework for the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA) to effectively manage patient waiting lists, ensuring timely and efficient delivery of healthcare services. This strategy is based on the principles and best practices followed by the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom and other healthcare systems which have been adapted to suit the specific needs of Gibraltar. It aims to improve patient experience, optimize resource allocation, and minimize waiting times for medical and surgical treatment.

### Principles:

To address the waiting lists, systematically and equitably, the GHA has adopted the following set of guiding principles.

1. **Establishing Clear Governance Arrangements:** Committed to establishing robust governance structures characterised by transparency and openness with our staff and members of the public. These structures will provide a framework for efficient, consistent decision-making and accountability.
2. **Allocating dedicated administrative support:** To ensure the seamless management of waiting lists and effective patient communication, the GHA/GOG must prioritise allocation of dedicated, well-trained administrative personnel who consistently uphold the highest standards of service. This will be reflected in the annual estimates.
3. **Implementing Standard Operating Procedures:** Recognise the importance of standardised processes and procedures. Our aim is to document these protocols comprehensively, addressing not only general guidelines but also specialty-specific considerations. This will ensure that patients' needs are met in order of clinical priority, and thereafter referral date.
4. **Setting Clinical Targets:** Setting clinically appropriate targets for acceptable waiting times is essential. These targets will serve as benchmarks against which the GHA will measure its performance and the quality of care it provides to patients.
5. **Strengthening Quality Data Utilization:** The GHA's commitment to excellence extends to the utilization of quality-reviewed and assured data and information. This data will be instrumental in monitoring performance and reporting on its progress toward achieving waiting list management goals.

6. **Ensuring Resource Optimisation:** The GHA (with the support from the GOG) will make well-informed resource allocation decisions by conducting thorough assessments of demand. Steps will be taken to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of existing resource deployment, with consideration given to requesting additional resources when necessary.
7. **Clear two-way communication with patients.** Ensuring that patients can take shared responsibility for reducing wasted appointments and communicate changes in their needs. We will always communicate clearly in respect of appointment times, arrangements to cancel and the implications of non-attendance.

### Objectives:

1. **Data collection, performance reporting and analysis:**
  - a. Establish quality-assured data capture systems and processes that ensure the organisation can maintain accurate information by specialty on patients requiring treatment and their respective waiting times from referral to treatment.
    - i. This must accommodate the additional complexity of use of tertiary and external centers in Gibraltar, England, and Spain.
  - b. Collaborate with clinical teams to review clinical priorities and ensure appropriate categorisation for the effective management of patients.
  - c. Establish clinically appropriate targets for waiting times for different medical specialties and priorities high-demand specialties and subspecialties.
  - d. Regularly analyse waiting list data to identify bottlenecks, trends, fluctuations in demand and pinpoint areas requiring intervention.
2. **Transparent Waiting List Management:**
  - a. Implement a fair and transparent system for prioritising patients based on clinical need, severity, and urgency of their condition.
  - b. Publish waiting time performance information publicly to enhance transparency and manage patient expectations.
  - c. Provide patients with clear and consistent information on their position in the waiting list, estimated waiting times, and any available alternative options.



**3. Capacity Planning and Resource Allocation:**

- a. Conduct regular demand and capacity assessments to determine the demand for different medical specialties and procedures.
- b. Allocate clinical resources based on capacity assessments, ensuring a balance between demand and available resources.
- c. Explore partnerships with private healthcare providers or neighboring healthcare systems to optimise local resource utilisation and reduce waiting times.

**4. Reducing Waiting Times:**

- a. Implement standardised procedures, guidelines, and initiatives to maximise operational efficiency, such as optimizing scheduling, improving patient flow, and reducing administrative burdens.
- b. Utilise technological solutions, where applicable, to streamline processes, reduce paperwork, and facilitate communication between healthcare providers and patients.
- c. Establish clear performance targets and both incentivise and empower healthcare providers to meet or exceed them, encouraging a culture of continuous improvement.
- d. Increase capacity for high-demand specialties and procedures as validated evidence to support requirement becomes available. Measures to be considered should include the recruitment of additional healthcare professionals and expanding facilities.

**5. Patient Communication and Engagement:**

- a. Establish dedicated and trained administrative support, SOPs, and standard templates for communication.
- b. Enhance communication with patients throughout the waiting period using SOPs to provide regular updates and addressing any concerns or queries promptly.
- c. Develop patient education materials explaining the waiting list process, expected waiting times, and available support services.
- d. Promote patient engagement and self-care strategies to optimise patient outcomes and well-being during the waiting period.
- e. Produce standard communication by specialty in respect of arrangements for cancelling appointments and responsibility for communicating with the GHA in respect of individual changes. This communication will clearly state the implications of non-attendance and not cancelling appointments.

**6. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement:**

- a. Foster collaboration among healthcare providers, policymakers, ministers, and other stakeholders to address systemic issues contributing to waiting times.
- b. Engage clinicians and frontline staff in the development and implementation of specific waiting list strategies to ensure their insights and expertise are utilised.
- c. Seek feedback from patients and actively involve patient advocacy groups in the evaluation and improvement of waiting list management processes.

**7. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- a. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the waiting list strategy and its impact on reducing waiting times and improving patient outcomes.
- b. Review patient feedback and incorporate suggestions for improvement.
- c. Stay informed about developments in waiting list management strategies in the NHS and other healthcare systems, adapting, and adopting best practices accordingly.

**8. Workforce.**

- a. Key to implementing this strategy is the need to have a workforce Plan that supports and ensure all professional groups (clinical and non-clinical) are skilled to deliver the agenda. This will mean revisiting the skill mix required and working with the University of Gibraltar and other educational establishments both in Gibraltar and elsewhere to train our staff so they are competent to deliver high quality safe services in line with our the needs of the service which offer the GHA/GOG value for money



**By implementing this comprehensive waiting list strategy, the Gibraltar Health Authority can proactively manage patient waiting times, improve access to healthcare services, and enhance patient experience.**

**Regular monitoring, collaboration with stakeholders, and continuous evaluation will be essential to ensure the strategy's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments to meet evolving patient needs and expectations.**

**Finally, while recognising much more work needs to be done to achieve the above, through the adoption of this framework, the GHA aims to minimise waiting times, improve patient outcomes, and provide compassionate care to all individuals in need while offering value for money to the GoG.**