

The GHA makes significant progress towards tackling waiting lists and introduces a waiting list strategy.

As a component of the government Reset, Restart and Recover program the GHA Board promised to ensure that the GHA not only restored services to pre-pandemic levels, but also put specific service strategies and plans in place to recover post-pandemic to widen access to services and improve performance, and to ensure that the future of services remain on track.

Our Waiting List Strategy (attached) is a key plank of this work and outlines the framework for the Health Authority to ensure we effectively, address the backlog impact from the pandemic and manage patient waiting lists going forward through ensuring timely and efficient delivery of healthcare services. It is based on the principles and best practices followed by the National Health Service (NHS).

The strategy aims to:

- improve patient experience
- optimise resource allocation
- minimise waiting times for appointments
- ensure clinical treatment and procedures are prioritised according to clinical need

The strategy provides a framework for a number of process that help is to achieve these aims through:

- effective communication
- streamlined processes
- appropriate prioritisation
- efficient resource allocation
- regular monitoring and continuous evaluation

The strategy is another important step, in establishing clearer governance, more open and transparent reporting structures as well as formally documenting the first national waiting list policy for Gibraltar's Healthcare System. We intend to evaluate, review, and update progress against the strategy at least every 24 months.

What we have done to reduce waiting times already...

We have already embarked on many initiatives to manage and reduce waiting lists within our hospital and community settings. To support the recover element of our strategy, we have:

- established new care pathways
- environmental enhancements including a new theatre and sterile supplies unit
- improved our performance in respect of the volume of work undertaken
- and undertaken specific waiting list initiative work where there was considerable backlog as a consequence of the pandemic

The table below highlights areas of significant improvement that have already been achieved and we will continue to work to increase the number of appointments and procedures either within available resources and specifically funded initiatives until the system is fully stabilised and running optimally.

The improvement achieved to date are in many cases already better than many other healthcare systems post pandemic.

Examples of improvements to the average length of time waiting made to date include:

Service	Median Average Waiting time – Jan 2023 (Weeks)	Median Average Waiting time – End of August 2023 (Weeks)
Hip & Knee clinic appointment	96 weeks	7 weeks
Orthopaedic surgery	40 weeks	8 weeks
Plastic surgery	185 weeks	46 weeks
Endoscopy – urgent	9 weeks	2 weeks
Endoscopy – routine	34 weeks	6 weeks
Ultrasound	11 weeks	8 weeks
Special Needs Paediatric Dental	79 Weeks	9 Weeks

Specific examples of actions taken and specialty waiting list reduction initiatives

Modernisation of our equipment and facilities and processes

The acquisition of more up-to-date laparoscopic and endoscopy equipment with the addition of a new operating theatre have contributed to this major improvement to our services. To better keep track of patients, we have also introduced e-referrals utilising technology and systems to improve communication to reduce the time patients are waiting.

Orthopaedics

Waiting times in our Orthopaedic surgical services have reduced significantly in this post-pandemic year. The restart and recovery of this area involved a full review of our Orthopaedic services and a restructure of the department with recommendations and plans in place. We have, provided additional physiotherapy input to the pathway, We have also increased the service for patients requiring joint injections and will be monitoring the impact on overall waiting times.

Ophthalmology

The service was reviewed and restructured with the addition of a consultant and specialist nursing members of the team. The expanded nursing role has led to a better structured service with increased duties including pre-operative assessments. The service is seeing more patients and reducing waiting times. This summer saw new waiting list initiatives for both clinics with aim of completing approximately 400 cataract operations completed between August and the end of September 2024.

Plastic Surgery

Additional sessions of visiting consultant to address backlog and ongoing sessions to manage demand going forward.

Radiology

Additional sessions of ultrasound radiology have been delivered to address backlog.

Dental

The service has also been reviewed and we are in the process of implementing the recommendations. While we are implementing longer-term actions a waiting list initiative is being implemented to help address the backlog of check-ups for children, which was further compounded during the pandemic as well as those who need to be prioritised for orthodontic treatment for clinical reasons. **This initiative includes** an extra locum dental officer and orthodontist. We will be reviewing the impact of this initiative on overall waiting times as it is implemented.

Going forward

Once we have completed the current round of initiatives, provided there are no further waves of pandemic, and the winter season doesn't significantly undermine current forecasts our waiting time targets for 2024/25 are:

- Listing to surgery of less than one year for all specialities (except plastics) by October 2023
- Time from GP referral to first review under 12 months by December 2023 for all specialities (limited primarily by foot and ankle)
- Referral to treatment time for all specialities under 12 months by December 2024
- Referral to treatment time for all specialities under 18 weeks by December 2025

This is a real success story involve patients being able to see a clinician when and where they need to. This could be a doctor, nurse, dentist, therapist, midwife, or other member of a clinical team. We recognise that we may not have caught up for everybody, and that systems are not always perfect but we are confident in the coming months you will see even further improvements.