

Orthopaedic elective/ planned care provision across Hywel Dda

As you are aware, Covid 19 has impacted on our ability to treat elective orthopaedic patients and waiting lists have grown substantially as a result.

NHS bodies across Wales, including ourselves in Hywel Dda, are facing multiple challenges including the impact of staff leave, self-isolation, difficulties in discharging medically-fit patients, high emergency demand and an increase in Covid patients being admitted to hospitals.

What we are doing is all about prioritising patient safety at this time but one of the consequences of this is that we are having to bring back temporary measures including postponing some elective surgery in the short term, to ensure we can safely care for patients. The rise in cases in Hywel Dda shows that, whilst hospital admissions are not as high as in previous waves, COVID-19 remains a serious risk to our health and our health service.

The Health Board has continued to maintain communication with patients on orthopaedic waiting lists to ensure that they are aware of what is happening within the service and to confirm that they still want to receive their surgery and are happy to proceed should they be offered a date to come in.

We are currently able to undertake limited inpatient and day case surgery at Bronglais hospital, Aberystwyth and day case surgery only at Withybush Hospital, Haverfordwest. Inpatient orthopaedic surgery was postponed at Withybush in July, as was all orthopaedic surgery at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli in early September for the above reasons. The potential to restart and/or increase this throughput is reviewed daily.

We are therefore mindful that additional resources are required to assist in address the backlog of patients waiting for surgery whose condition is likely to have deteriorated since being listed for surgery. It is important that we address our waiting lists by treating patients in line with their clinical urgency and, in line with Royal College Guidance, Consultants have risk stratified patients on their waiting lists. The focus will be on addressing these risk stratified cohorts in order to ensure we are treating those with the complex needs first.

The Health Board has already received monies from Welsh Government to assist in addressing orthopaedic wait times which has been used to secure outsourcing contracts with the private sector. These have been awarded to treat primarily hip and knee replacement patients and we are currently in the process of identifying appropriate cases in line with the provider's criteria.

Due to restricted and intermittent surgical activity, the ability to reliably calculate a patients wait time for surgery is extremely difficult and as patients are continually added to these waiting lists, predicted wait times change continually. We therefore thank our patients for their patience and advise that should they experience any deterioration to their condition that they request a follow-up appointment with their consultant.

Outpatient appointments are taking place at all venues as they were pre-Covid.

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