

Reference:	FOI.21159.26
Subject:	Knee replacements
Date of Request:	28 July 2026

Requested:

I would be grateful if you would send me the following answers to my questions please:

1. How many patients are waiting for knee replacement.
2. How many knee replacements fall within your 36 weeks upon receipt of referral.
3. Having had treatment by this Health Board the longest waiting times.
 - Is this through lack of operating theatres.
 - Lack of consultants/staff
 - Lack of good and knowledgeable management/too many managers.
4. Why patients are not sent to other hospitals (within this health board) or to any hospital throughout the UK
5. Why are patients not being referred to private facilities for treatment to elevate the problems at NHS cost.
6. Have you thought about offering patients half of the cost of a private treatment with the patient also paying half.

Clarification

2. I'm looking to answers that fall within this past 12 months please regarding all points.
 - a. Especially how many knee replacements were carried out, and were these carried out within the 36 weeks?
 - b. If not how many weeks before they were?
 - c. How many patients are on the waiting list for knee replacement at any one time.

Response:

1. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) confirms that there were two thousand, three hundred and ninety-three (2,393) patients waiting for a knee replacement, as at 17 August 2026.
2. The UHB confirms that five hundred and seventy-eight (578) knee replacement procedures were undertaken, during the period 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026.
 - a. Ninety (90) of these procedures were undertaken within thirty-six (36) weeks.
 - b. Four hundred and eighty-eight (488) procedures were undertaken over thirty-six (36) weeks. A breakdown, by weeks, is provided below.

Weeks	Number
37 to 47	22

48 to 57	86
58 to 67	63
68 to 79	36
80 to 91	23
92 to 101	48
102 to 111	133
112 to 121	43
122 to 134	16
135 to 173	11
174 to 256	7
Total	488

Please note:- a patient may be present in the data more than once if they returned for a repeat procedure during the period.

- c. The UHB does not hold this information, as the numbers on the waiting list are constantly changing, with patients being added to and removed from the waiting list daily.
3. The UHB does not hold the information exactly as requested, as it does not attribute waiting times to any single factor. However, waiting times within Orthopaedics are influenced by a combination of factors including patient demand, workforce availability, theatre capacity, bed availability and the ongoing recovery efforts. The Service continues to review and address these factors through its planned care recovery programmes.

The availability of theatre sessions can be impacted by emergency pressures, staffing requirements, bed capacity, and the need to prioritise urgent and emergency cases, which affect service delivery.

Workforce availability is also a contributing factor, with recruitment and retention challenges affecting a range of clinical staff groups, impacting on the UHB's ability to deliver planned care activity and reduce waiting lists.

Waiting times are monitored through established governance and performance management arrangements, and service improvement programmes are in place to support planned care recovery.

4. The UHB uses the All Wales Prior Approval Policy to assess referrals to another hospital. In line with this policy, patients should not be able to access healthcare services elsewhere unless all treatment options available within locally provided services or those commissioned by Health Boards have been exhausted and it is clinically appropriate to do so.

In addition, if the reason for referral is due to the lack of local expertise, the clinician must demonstrate that the referral being made is to an 'expert' within that specific clinical speciality.

The All Wales Prior Approval Policy does not apply to the following factors:

- Non-clinical factors (such as employment status) will not be considered when making decisions on prior approval requests.
- Waiting time factors will not be considered when considering prior approvals, as this will theoretically prioritise some patients over others who are in the same clinical position.

- Patient choice, as the NHS in Wales does not operate a system of patient choice.

Policy 702 – NHS Wales Prior Approval Policy is available on the UHB's Policies and written control documents webpage, and can be accessed via the link provided below:

[Policies and written control documents - Hywel Dda University Health Board](#)

5. Patients are not being referred to private facilities for treatment as the UHB adheres to the All Wales Prior Approval Policy, which excludes referrals to private facilities and excludes reimbursement for private treatment. See section 4.0 of the policy for exclusions.

However, on occasion, the UHB has commissioned additional orthopaedic activity from independent sector providers. This has typically been facilitated through specific Welsh Government (WG) recovery funding or waiting list initiative funding.

Nevertheless, outsourcing is not routinely used as the primary solution to waiting list pressures. Independent sector treatment is generally significantly more expensive than providing equivalent treatment within NHS facilities and therefore, does not represent a sustainable long-term approach to managing demand.

In addition, the availability of independent sector capacity is limited, and not all orthopaedic patients are suitable for treatment outside NHS services due to the complexity of their clinical needs and the requirement for ongoing multidisciplinary care and follow-up.

The UHB's preferred approach is to maximise NHS capacity and productivity whilst making use of additional external capacity where appropriate funding and suitable providers are available.

6. This is not a valid FOI request, as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) covers any recorded information that is held by a public authority; recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, and sound or video recordings. The FoIA does not cover information on estimates, opinions or recommendations. The UHB has an obligation to provide information already in recorded form but cannot create new information to answer a question. Therefore, the UHB is unable to provide you with the information requested.