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# NHS waiting times campaign toolkit

Everything you need to support our campaign

# About the campaign

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many people having their operations, treatment and appointments delayed. A record number of people - more than 5.45 million - are waiting for NHS hospital treatment in England. We want to find out how this is affecting people and what can be done to better support people while they wait.

## The plan

To run a month-long campaign launching on the 6 September to learn about the impact of delays on people, how they are coping while they wait and what support they think would help them better manage their health.

# News story

Encourage people to share their experience using our template news story.

## Template news story

Title: **Are you or your loved ones waiting for hospital care? Share you views**

Intro: Millions of people have had their treatment delayed by the pandemic – are you one of them? We want to know if you’re getting the advice, information and support you need while you wait.

Insert photo

**Millions waiting for care because of pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many people having their operations, treatment and appointments cancelled or delayed.

The NHS had to postpone non-urgent elective care treatment when the pandemic hit, freeing up inpatient and critical care capacity. While this helped medical staff respond to the crisis, it has resulted in a huge backlog of people waiting for treatment.

The latest data shows that the number of people waiting for routine operations and procedures in England is at its highest level since 2007 – currently at 5.45 million.

**Impact of delayed treatment**

The impact of delayed treatment can be huge, potentially leaving you in pain and affecting both your physical and mental health. It can even stop you working and performing day-to-day tasks, such as cleaning, shopping and caring for others.

If you’re not getting enough support to manage your health while you wait for care, then that’s not acceptable.

[Share your views](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/) [If you are using the new Healthwatch website, insert pink button here]

**What could be improved?**

It’s essential that while you wait for treatment, you get support to manage your health and wellbeing in a way that is best for you. If you need hospital treatment, you should be receiving advice and information from the NHS about how to look after your health while you wait. You should be kept informed about the dates of your treatment and where you are on the waiting list.

**Share your views to help people waiting for care**

It’s vital that decision makers hear your experience of waiting for care as a result of the pandemic and the subsequent backlog. Whether it’s gynaecological surgery, a knee replacement or a biopsy you’re waiting for, if you’ve got a story to tell, we’re here to listen.

Everything you tell us is confidential and will help us understand what needs to be put in place to better support people waiting for treatment like you. So, whether your experience is good or bad – we want to hear it.

Help us to help the NHS better support people like you by completing our short survey and telling us your experience of waiting for care.

[Share your views](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/) [If you are using the new Healthwatch website, insert pink button here]

# Advice and information article

Make sure people know what information and support they are entitled to while they wait for care by using our guidance on your website.

## Advice and information copy

Title: **What to expect when waiting for care**

Intro: Waiting for planned medical care or surgery can be a frustrating time. That’s why it’s so important that while you wait, you get regular, clear and accessible updates so that you can plan your next steps.

Main body text:

If you or a loved one is waiting for care, read below to find out what healthcare staff should be doing when contacting you.

**Communications from healthcare staff should:**

1. **Be personalised to you and not just a generic response**

When you’re contacted by healthcare staff about your upcoming appointment, they should provide honest information about your next steps. You must be made aware of realistic timescales and what to expect while you wait so that you can make an informed decision about your treatment.

1. **Put you at ease around safety concerns regarding COVID-19**

Significant steps have been taken to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission while in hospitals. But, if you have any concerns about your safety while in hospital, you should be given contact details to discuss these concerns with a healthcare professional.

1. **Use clear language**

When healthcare staff contact you, the language they use should be clear, accessible and easy to understand – whether that’s by letter, email or on the phone. Of course, sometimes technical terms are needed, but these should always be explained to you first.

1. **Share their decision making**

You should be part of the conversation when decisions about your health are being made. Healthcare staff should support you to make the right decisions for you and outline the risks and benefits of going ahead with, cancelling or delaying your procedure.

Box out [if you are using the new Healthwatch England website, add a grey text box]

**Share your experience**

Are you one of the five million people waiting for NHS hospital treatment? We want to know if you’re getting the advice, information and support you need while you wait. Everything you tell us is confidential and will help the NHS understand how it can better support people waiting for treatment like you. So, whether your experience is good or bad – we want to hear it.

[Share your story](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/) [If you are using the new Healthwatch website, insert pink button here]

End of box out

1. **Be transparent about delays and cancellations**

When contacted regarding a delay or cancellation to your appointment, you should be given a clear reason and information about what happens next. Healthcare professionals must be open and honest with you and give a realistic timescale when you should expect to hear from them again. Further support should be provided to you to help you manage your condition whilst waiting for care. This could be information about or access to other health and care services, or access to pain relief. Above all, it should be clear who you should contact if your condition deteriorates. Your safety should always be the priority.

If you are waiting for an operation and this gets cancelled for a non-clinical reason on the day you were due for surgery, your hospital should offer you another fixed date within 28 days or fund your treatment at a date and hospital of your choice.

1. **Ensure you’re contacted in your preferred way**

Information about your upcoming care should be easy to access and you should be provided with the option to ask questions. It’s also essential that the way you prefer to receive information is met. A phone call is often a popular choice, but alternative options should be available for any patient with specific language or communication needs.

**Where can you find further advice and support**? [Insert details of local services that can support people while they wait for care if they exist in your area]

# Social media

Use our social media messages and assets to share the survey with your followers.

## People waiting for treatment

To help you target people waiting for care, you can focus your social media messages on the following procedures and treatment types.

* Operation/procedure
	+ Cardiovascular surgery – non-emergency, e.g. varicose vein removal, or more urgent, e.g. angioplasty.
	+ Cosmetic surgery, e.g. any reconstructive or reshaping work.
	+ Diagnostic surgery, e.g. biopsy or exploratory.
	+ Gynaecological surgery.
	+ Joint replacement surgery.
* Hospital appointment/consultation.
* Ongoing hospital treatment/review.
* Rehabilitation.

Emergency procedures and treatment for cancer is not included in the waiting time figures.

## Facebook messages

* **General** - Are you or your loved one waiting for hospital care, like a hip replacement or a diagnosis for a health condition? It’s important that while you wait, you’re getting advice and information to manage your health. You can help the NHS better support people like you by completing our short survey and telling us your experience of waiting for care: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **Support** - The NHS is working hard to get people the hospital treatment they need. But we know you might not be getting enough support to manage your health while you wait for care. This is not okay. But it can only get better if you tell us your experience of waiting, so we can work with the NHS to improve how they support people like you. Share your story today in our short survey: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **Impact** – The impact of wating for treatment can be huge, potentially leaving you in pain and affecting both your physical health and how you feel day-to-day. That’s why it’s vital the NHS hears your experience of waiting for care as a result of the pandemic. Whether it’s gynaecological surgery, a knee replacement or a biopsy, if you’ve got a story to tell, we’re here to listen: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **5 million** – Millions of people have had their treatment delayed by the pandemic – are you one of them? We want to hear your experience of waiting for care and what support and information you’re getting to look after your health: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **Advice piece** - Waiting for planned medical care or surgery can be frustrating. That’s why it’s so important you get regular, clear and accessible updates about your treatment. Find out what you should expect from the NHS: https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-09-06/what-expect-when-waiting-care

## Twitter messages

* **General** - Are you or your loved one waiting for X treatment? We want to know if you have been given advice, information or support to help you while you wait.
* **General** – Are you or your loved one waiting for X treatment? We want to know how you’re being supported to look after your health/condition while you wait.
* **Support** – The NHS is working hard to get people the care they need. But we know you might not be getting enough support to manage your health while you wait. That’s why we want to hear your experience so we can help the NHS improve support for people like you: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **Impact** - The impact of waiting for treatment can be huge – from your physical health to how you feel mentally. That’s why it’s vital the NHS hears your experience of waiting for care as result of the pandemic. If you’ve got a story to tell, we’re here to listen: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **Communication** – Has your treatment been delayed by the pandemic? How much notice did you get before your care had been moved? If you need hospital treatment, we want to hear your experience of waiting: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **5 million** – Are you one of the five million people waiting for hospital care? We want to hear your experience of waiting and what support and information you’re getting to look after your health: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
* **Advice piece** - Waiting for planned medical care or surgery can be frustrating. That’s why it’s so important you get regular, clear and accessible updates about your treatment. Find out what you should expect from the NHS in our latest advice piece: https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-09-06/what-expect-when-waiting-care

## Instagram

We have added suggested hashtags below, but you can also use popular hashtags for different conditions and health issues, e.g. #endometriosis or #endowarrior

* **General** - Are you or your loved one waiting for hospital care, like a hip replacement or a diagnosis for a health condition? It’s important that while you wait, you’re getting advice and information to manage your health. You can help the NHS better support people like you by completing our short survey and telling us your experience of waiting for care: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/>
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#NHS #Hospital #Surgery #Health #ChronicPain
* **Advice** **piece** - Waiting for planned medical care or surgery can be frustrating. That’s why it’s so important you get regular, clear and accessible updates about your treatment. Find out what you should expect from the NHS: https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-09-06/what-expect-when-waiting-care
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#NHS #Hospital #Surgery #Health #ChronicPain

# Email marketing

Tell people signed up to your mailing list about our campaign.

## Template email

Hello \*|FNAME|\*

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that a record number of people - more than 5.45 million - are waiting for NHS hospital treatment in England.

Are you one of them? If so, it’s vital you get the advice, information and support you need while you wait.

But we know not everyone is, which is why we need you to share your experience of waiting for care with us.

Everything you tell us is confidential and will help the NHS understand how it can better support people waiting for treatment like you. So, whether your experience is good or bad – we want to hear it.

[Tell us your experience](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SQVSJO/)