

healthwatch Suffolk

The wait for treatment

Key learning poster summary

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Trusted Insights

Improving the wait for hospital care

Communication

1. Every contact with people waiting for care across systems is an opportunity to find out how they are managing or coping with their wait. It's also a chance to signpost them to information and support that can help.

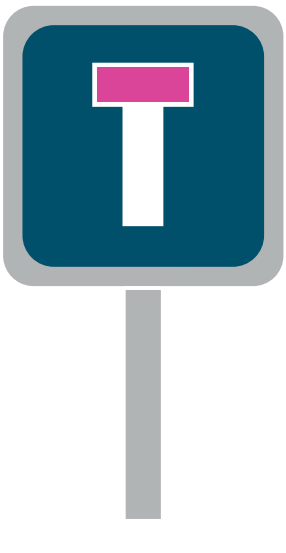
2. Access to good communication, including clear, up-to-date, and consistent updates on waiting times, is extremely important. This is especially true when appointments are cancelled. This is the best way to reduce anxiety for those waiting and to avoid the build-up of frustration.

   Where it is necessary to cancel procedures, services should aim to provide revised wait times and inform people (within reason) of the reasons why their appointment will no longer take place.

3. Language is very important. Terms such as 'urgent' and 'priority' are frequently used. However, they do not reflect the experiences of most patients and can be misleading as to the reality of people's waits for care.

4. Gynaecology patients were the least satisfied with communication from their hospitals and may benefit from a different approach to communication.

No way through...



It was clear that people had struggled to find updated information about their wait. Often, calls went unanswered or were not returned, or the contact information provided was incorrect.

"The different ways of finding where you are on the list is confusing and frustrating... The app gave a date to be contacted by, and a number to call if I wasn't contacted. The phone line was dead."



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2. Waiting well information should be prioritised to address the real-life impacts people experience as a result of their wait, such as issues with pain, managing work, avoiding deconditioning and other similar issues.

4. Families and friends have an important role to support loved ones, and to keep them positively engaged in healthy behaviours while they wait. Information and advice for family members could be a feature of the 'waiting well' offer.

6. **Are we activating patients to engage in healthy pre-conditioning?** It's not enough to signpost or expect that people will be instantly motivated to take up the offer of support. Positive attitudes to health management can be developed through person-centred conversations with professionals across systems (e.g., 'Health Coaching').

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Shrinking worlds

People's worlds shrink when they're waiting for care. Often, mobility is lost, money gets tighter, and relationships change. We must support people to navigate these changes to avoid impacts on other services.

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Learn more about this research: **www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/elective24**

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