

WAITING TIMES REPORT – JANUARY 2006

1 Introduction

The purpose of the report is to update the NHS Board on the waiting time position for those services for which there is a national waiting time guarantee.

2 Inpatient, Day Case and Outpatients

In January 2006, NHS Lanarkshire maintained the national waiting time guarantee that no patient wait over twenty-six weeks for an inpatient, day case or outpatient appointment. In addition, no patient is waiting longer than eight and eighteen weeks for angiography and angioplasty respectively.

The next stage is for NHS Lanarkshire to demonstrate how it intends to further improve waiting time standards and deliver the national waiting time guarantees set by the Scottish Executive to be achieved by 31 December 2007. This will mean that no patient will wait longer than eighteen weeks for an inpatient, day case or outpatient appointment. In addition, specific waiting time guarantees have been set for selected services including cataract surgery, cardiac intervention and hip surgery where more challenging guarantees have been set to be achieved within the same timescale. All patients with an ASC code have also to be removed from the waiting list.

For all national waiting time guarantees, work is in progress to identify how those targets will be achieved and the implications of that for NHS Lanarkshire. This will be reflected in trajectories that will demonstrate a planned reduction in numbers of patients waiting over eighteen weeks over the period to 31 December 2007. This will be used as a basis for monitoring progress in delivering the guarantee. Details of the trajectories will be shared with the NHS Board at their meeting in February 2006. Delivery of the improved waiting time guarantees will require an increase in capacity both internally through permanent investment and increased access to the National Golden Jubilee Hospital and externally through access to the independent sector. The nature and extent of that investment is currently the subject of discussion with the Director of Finance.

3 Cancer

The NHS Board had previously been advised that NHS Lanarkshire, together with all NHS Boards in the West of Scotland, had been unable to deliver the national waiting time guarantee that the maximum wait from receipt from a General Practitioner of an urgent referral for cancer to treatment should not exceed sixty-two days by 31 December 2005.

A significant issue has been the availability of relevant patient data to inform identification of pressure areas and issues around capacity to improve the patient journey. This is being addressed through appointment of patient trackers, the introduction of single referral protocol for each main tumour type and the use of software to electronically track patients through the patient journey. It is anticipated that reporting on real time events will be available from March 2006. This will inform preparation of trajectories for each main tumour type leading to delivery of the waiting time guarantee. It will also facilitate discussion around the level and type of additional capacity required to deliver the improved guarantee.

4 Diagnostics

In January 2006, the maximum wait for access to diagnostic services did not exceed twenty-six weeks. This was in line with the current national waiting time guarantee. The next stage is to improve waiting time standards and deliver the national waiting time guarantee set by the Scottish Executive that no patient should wait more than nine weeks for access to diagnostic services by 31 December 2007.

Work is continuing to confirm current service baselines and definitions, establish common and consistent information capture and reporting on activity and performance and undertake modelling to identify the extent and nature of additional activity required to deliver the national waiting time guarantees. This will be reflected in trajectories that will demonstrate a planned reduction in the maximum number of weeks waited by patients for access to diagnostic services over the period to 31 December 2007.

5 Unscheduled Care

The guarantee to be achieved by 31 December 2007 will require NHS Lanarkshire to ensure patients wait a maximum of no more than four hours from arrival to discharge or transfer for accident and emergency treatment. The position at the end of January 2006 indicated 85% compliance with the guarantee. A plan outlining milestones to be achieved up to 31 December 2007 will be submitted to the Scottish Executive by the end of February 2007.

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