

NHS App: waiting times feature

Briefing for regional and ICB leads

January 2024

Prepared by the Wayfinder Programme at NHS England

Summary

From 30 January 2024, the NHS App will show patients an estimated waiting time for their hospital treatment at NHS acute trusts.

Why are we doing this?

We expect this new feature to improve patient experience by better informing patients about their secondary care pathway.

They will now know they are 'in the system' and on a waiting list, and the estimated month for treatment.

It could also help alleviate queries that would normally be directed to trusts and GP practices, potentially reducing call volumes from patients seeking an update.

And with NHS England estimating that up to 20% of calls to GP practices could be resolved through the [features for hospital appointments on the NHS App](#), we expect this new waiting times feature to free up more resources for patient care.

We are not creating any new processes for staff: this is about utilising existing information and providing it directly to patients on the NHS App.

Key information

- From 30 January 2024, the NHS App will show the mean (average) waiting time to patients aged 16 and over referred into a speciality at NHS acute trusts.
- This national rollout follows a successful trial period at Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, who worked with NHS England to monitor progress across the trust's telephony system, PALS service and local GP community. No issues (e.g. an increase in patient calls to hospital departments or GP practices) were reported.

- Note that since December 2023, the waiting time to treatment methodology used within the NHS e-Referral Service (e-RS) also changed to reflect the mean (average) waiting time. This aligns e-RS with the approach used in the My Planned Care (MPC) Patient Portal since April 2021.
- Also note that NHS App users under the care of [these trusts](#) can also view their hospital referrals and appointments in one place and see a single point of contact and supporting information for their appointments.

How the waiting times feature works

- Patients can already see information regarding their estimated waiting time on the NHS App: within the NHS e-Referral Service (e-RS) Manage Your Referral, when a patient selects their clinic, they are shown information regarding their first appointment and the mean (average) waiting time to start treatment. However, after this screen, a patient is no longer able to view this information as they continue their care journey.
- The new waiting times feature will continue to present the patient information stating they are on a waiting list at their provider and the estimated waiting time for treatment to ensure that patients are provided with a continued and consistent experience on the NHS App.
- The NHS App is using waiting list information from the Waiting List Minimum Data Set (WLMDS) and waiting times from My Planned Care (MPC). The WLMDS is the combined list of patients on waiting lists reported. MPC is based on data provided by each trust. The waiting time shown is the average (mean) of all patients waiting for treatment within the specialty at each trust.
- Data is updated weekly based on trust updates to WLMDS and MPC data, meaning the patient's expected treatment date, based on average waiting time, may move based on updates to trust data.

For more information

1. See the accompanying comms pack, FAQs, and 'lines to take' document
2. Visit the [NHS App website](#)
3. Join our [FutureNHS workspace](#) or email us at wayfinder.comms@nhs.net