

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY THE CONNÉTABLE OF ST. JOHN
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2014**

Question

Will the Minister give details of current waiting times for appointments in all clinical areas of the Hospital? Will she also give details of any staffing problems in various departments such as the eye clinic, for hip replacements, or in any other department that are impacting on waiting times?

Answer

The average waiting times for outpatients and procedures (**Appendix 1**) are now published on the States of Jersey website (www.gov.je/Government/Departments/HealthSocialServices) and will be updated monthly to allow the public direct access to this information.

It is important to note that these figures relate to the average wait for all patients including all 'urgent', 'soon' and 'routine' categories. The greater the number of 'urgent' cases by specialty, the longer the wait is likely to be for routine patients within that specialty, as 'urgent' cases will always be prioritised above 'routine'.

Improvements in figures for patients waiting over 12 weeks have been made since the beginning of the year, with 70% of all patients referred to Outpatients being seen within 12 weeks, and 81% of all patients requiring surgery, receiving it within 12 weeks.

The main pressures for surgical waiting times sit within Orthopaedics. Encouragingly, there has been a month on month reduction in the number of patients waiting more than 12 weeks for surgery in this field, but we acknowledge there is a great deal more to do.

Significant improvements have been made to reduce waiting times for a first Outpatient appointment in Orthopaedics. In January there were 1283 patients waiting for an orthopaedic opinion, with 650 patients waiting in excess of 12 weeks. As of August 31st, there were 558 patients waiting, with 33 patients waiting over 12 weeks.

Oral surgery has also noted significant improvements in Outpatient and surgical waiting times. The Department currently has just three patients waiting longer than 12 weeks for procedures, while Outpatient waits have also been reduced, with no more than 25 waiting longer than 12 weeks.

Some patients may wait longer than 12 weeks and there can be a number of reasons for this. Occasionally it is because a patient does not want to accept the initial appointment offered to them, because they may be on holiday or for another personal reason.

In terms of waiting lists for a procedure, in some cases a patient may not be considered physically fit enough to undergo the procedure for a variety of reasons, or the Consultant may have indicated that the patient needs to take some action before undergoing surgery.

All of these situations can contribute to far longer waiting times for some patients.

Reducing waiting times for patients remains a key priority for the Hospital. The Department continues to successfully use LEAN methodology to review its current practices and apply learning across all areas, where it is relevant. Outpatient waits in Pain and Gastroenterology services have been identified as the next areas of targeted focus.

There are currently no specific or extraordinary staffing issues directly impacting on waiting lists.

All Consultant vacancies within the hospital have now been filled.

In Ophthalmology, the latest appointment started in post on September 15th, bringing the number of Consultants in this area to a full complement of three.

Within Orthopaedics, we have been using Locum staff. This is assisting with the improvement in waiting times for orthopaedic patients.

I would urge any States Member who is approached by a member of the public with concerns about their waiting time to advise them to speak to the Department directly, as they will know the accurate details of the individual case and be able to address any issues.