

Freedom of Information Request: Our Reference CTMUHB_380_22

You asked:

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the high number of people waiting for arthritis-related surgery in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board area. In Wales, there are 275,000 people with osteoarthritis of the knee and 180,000 people with osteoarthritis of the hip. For those living with severe osteoarthritis, one of the best treatments to ease pain, improve mobility and restore independence is joint replacement surgery. These operations can radically change lives.

The total number of people waiting for surgery in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board area is 13,717. A total of 5,007 people have been waiting for over one year, whilst 2,204 people have been waiting for over two years.

I recently met with Versus Arthritis to discuss this crucial issue in our local health service. The severe extent of the impact on the quality of life for people waiting for arthritis-related surgery cannot be understated.

I would be very grateful for an update on the following:

1. The Health Board's planning for the development of elective orthopaedic centre(s) and/or the better protection of elective orthopaedic services from external pressures going forward.

The Health Board has a range of actions underway to develop elective centres and better protect activity as follows:

- The Health Board is **reconfiguring inpatient orthopaedic surgery** to address the backlog of operations, with the Royal Glamorgan Hospital (RGH) becoming the centre for inpatient surgery which will ring fence a 24 bedded ward with associated orthopaedic theatre capacity. All orthopaedic day surgery will be undertaken at Princess of Wales (POW) and Prince Charles Hospitals (PCH), increasing the number of orthopaedic lists across the HB.
- **Trauma services** (these are essentially emergency cases – for example fractured hips, injuries occurring as a result of accident or fall) are to be realigned across the Board. The aim of this is to minimise the impact on elective capacity, as trauma surgery, which is not predictable, can, by its nature, be very disruptive for day to day planned surgery.
- **Pathway developments** to support effectiveness and efficiency (such as the project to support one day length of stay for some joint replacement surgery) are being developed with the aim of utilising capacity fully and not wasting valuable operating time.
- The development of a **regional plan in partnership** with Cardiff and Vale and Aneurin Bevan Health Boards. This is new to the area and has been started to ensure improved access to all orthopaedic services across the region and the best use of the capacity available.

- The UHB has a well-established **Planned Care Recovery Programme**, with monthly meetings held to act as a focus for the reporting of all activities and actions in connection with reducing the numbers waiting across all specialties including orthopaedics.
- The UHB continues in its efforts to the protection of elective beds at a time of great demand for emergency capacity. There is a wide range of activity across the **Unplanned Care Group** aimed at making improvements in Flow to protect elective capacity including daily multi disciplinary detailed management of all aspects of the patient pathways from the Emergency Departments onwards.

2. The Health Board’s current monthly activity levels for elective hip and knee replacement operations compared to pre-pandemic levels for the same month.

The activity levels are as follows:

Number of Hip & Knee Replacement Episodes	
November & December 2019	231
November & December 2020	52
November & December 2021	115
November & December 2022	112
Jan 2023 *1 month	65

3. The Health Board’s communication and support programmes for people on orthopaedic waiting lists to help them manage the challenges of their longer wait.

Actions include:

- As part of the **Waiting Well initiative**, colleagues from Physiotherapy and Dietetics will be running a Welsh Government funded pilot for anyone waiting for a Hip or Knee replacement. This will be a virtual clinic which will include education and advice, covering pain, exercise, diet, lifestyle choices). Orthopaedic Consultants will issue leaflets to patients regarding the clinic and if successful the pilot will be further funded and rolled out across Wales.
- Also within Therapies, there is also an **Escape Pain Service** which is not directly for any one waiting for surgery but advises on self-management of chronic pain. If deemed clinically appropriate, patients waiting for hip surgery could be referred into that service.
- The UHB is looking at the possibility of incorporating orthopaedics into its **Wellness and Improvement Service** (WISE) and it is hoped that a pathway will be developed to support these patients. It is early days, but conversations are ongoing with appropriate colleagues and WISE colleagues will be meeting the Orthopaedic Team within the coming month.

- In addition, the UHB has introduced the **MyMobility application** for patients awaiting total hip replacements, to provide rehab and pre-hab, ensuring patients are medically optimised for and when they have surgery they are able to be discharged sooner.
- The UHB has started a new patient pathway which is aimed at improving the service offered and will assist with the bed shortage that has been a challenge post Covid.

The basis of the change has been the practice of converting a selection of arthroplasty cases to day surgery, with eight carried out to date. These patients, who must be relatively fit and well-motivated, have the option explained to them and those who wish to proceed go on the day case list which is a separate pathway to the normal waiting list. Discharge on the day of surgery will always depend on patient safety and will vary from list to list, however at least two of the cases on each of these lists have been able to leave hospital on the same day as surgery.