

# **Waiting times for elective surgery**

The patients'/carers' experience

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# Accessible formats

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website

<http://cwmtafmorgannwgchc.wales>

Or ask for a copy by contacting our office.  
Contact details can be found on page 13

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# About Cwm Taf Morgannwg Community Health Council (CHC)

Cwm Taf Morgannwg CHC is the independent watchdog of the National Health Service (NHS) within Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend. We encourage and support people to have a voice in the design and delivery of NHS services.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg CHC works with the NHS, inspection and regulatory bodies. We provide an important link between those who plan and deliver NHS services, those who inspect and regulate it and those who use it.

We hear from the public in many different ways. Before the coronavirus pandemic, we regularly visited NHS services to hear from people while they were receiving care and treatment. We spoke directly to some carers and relatives too. We also heard from people at local community events, and by having discussions with community representatives and groups.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, we have needed to change the various ways we engage with the public and patients. This has included the introduction of online surveys and videoconferencing using apps such as `Teams` and an increased social media presence to hear from people directly about their views and experiences of NHS services. We also continue to hear from people through enquiries and our independent advocacy service. Cwm Taf Morgannwg CHC represents the `patient and public` voice in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend.

# Introduction & background

In line with our Operational Plan 2020/21, we wanted to hear about patients and carers experiences of waiting times for elective surgery following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In May 2022, The Board of Community Health Councils in Wales produced an enquiry report into the impact of the waiting times backlog on people in Wales. You can find this report on their website.<https://boardchc.nhs.wales/files/still-waiting-report/>

We have also been hearing from patients and carers in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area about the delays to their care, and the impact this is having on their everyday life for them, and their families. We have heard from people through our social media, and via our National survey. You can still complete the survey via our website or using the link below:-  
<http://ow.ly/ezsy50ER6ZG>

In response to the escalated waiting times due to the pandemic, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board launched the Wellness Improvement Service (WISE). This service provides non-medical intervention to improve people's health and wellbeing whilst being on specific waiting lists. The team will initially support patients with the following:

- Chronic pain
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Emotional wellbeing – stress, anxiety, PTSD
- Cardiology – High Blood pressure
- Respiratory conditions

You can find more information about the service here.<https://ctmuhb.nhs.wales/wise-ctm/news-blog-events/hoot-news/wise-takes-flight/>

# What we did

We created an online questionnaire to gather patients and carers experience of waiting times. The survey was undertaken over a 10-week period, between 28 March 2022 and 1 June 2022.

We shared the survey on our website and via our Facebook and Twitter accounts. We also looked at the feedback we received via our National survey throughout the year

We also gained the support of many community groups and stakeholders to promote the survey by sharing our engagement articles via social media. This included:-

- ☺ Wales Council for Deaf People
- ☺ Disability Wales
- ☺ Local Authorities
- ☺ Voluntary sector organisations
- ☺ Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

**121** patients/carers provided feedback about their experience of waiting times via our survey.

# Who we heard from

We know that peoples' experiences of NHS services may be different depending on their personal characteristics, so we gave people the opportunity to complete our equality and diversity questionnaire to help us to understand this better. Here is a snapshot from the people who completed our equality and diversity survey.

Over 76% of those who completed our survey, completed our Equality & diversity questionnaire, representing 93 patients. Some chose to opt out of answering certain questions.

Approximately 66% were female

Age range categories:

Around **9%** were aged between 18-29 years old

Around **9%** were aged between 30 -40 years old

Around **9%** were aged between 40 – 50 years old

Around **25%** were aged between 50 – 60 years old

Around **20%** were aged between 60 – 70 years old

Around **23%** were aged 70 years old and over

**5%** did not answer this question

Around **89%** identified as heterosexual

Around **45%** had some form of disability

Around **3%** had a type of arthritis

Around **9%** experienced difficulty with mobility

You can find out from our Equality plan what we are doing to hear from different groups of people so that we can better represent the diversity of the communities we serve. You can find our Equality plan on our website

<https://cwmtafmorgannwgchc.nhs.wales/files/reports/equality-plan-202223/>

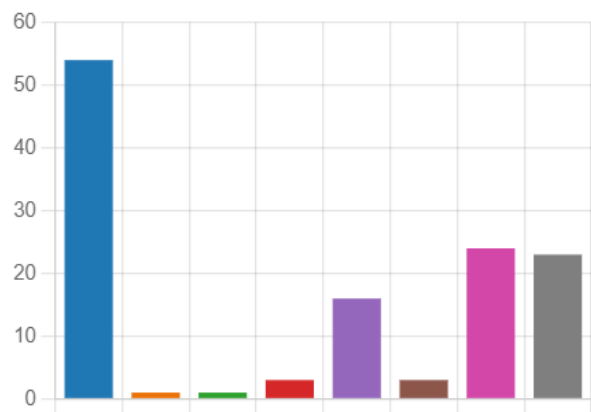
# What we heard

## Key findings from the survey

Patients and carers provided us with feedback about their experience of waiting times.

We asked which waiting lists people were waiting on:

● Orthopaedics	54
● Vascular	1
● Cardiology	1
● Ear, Nose and Throat	3
● Ophthalmology	16
● Urology	3
● Gynaecology	24
● Other	23



Surgery that people are waiting for in the 'other' category above included Dental surgery, hernia operations, and gallbladder surgery.

We also asked how long people have been waiting for surgery:

● 0-6 months	9
● 6 - 12 months	18
● 12 - 18 months	17
● 18 months - 24 months	16
● More than 24 months	61



People who waited more than 24 months for their care told us:-

"Got told I'll be sent for in a few weeks and 2+ years later still wait. Covid being the excuse!"



"I have had several pre-assessments but still haven't been given an exact date for surgery, but time is just getting longer and longer."

"Waited over four years, no help given, no support provided. Just left to rot"

On the whole, people who responded to our survey were unhappy with the amount of time that they are having to wait for their elective surgery and said that it is impacting their lives in some way.

We asked how many times people's surgery has been cancelled or postponed:

● Once	78
● Twice	19
● Three times	4
● More than three times	20



20 patients had their surgery cancelled more than 3 times. With only 12(10%) out of the 121 people who completed our survey saying that their hospital or health care providers has kept them up to date about any delays or changes to their surgery. Only 14 (12%) out of 121 people felt that their health care provider had put anything in place to help them during this time, such as help with pain management.

People told us:

"Since waiting for a knee replacement, I've had a further fall which resulted in a fractured vertebrae and a fractured pelvis, now I need a hip replacement which has been given a priority, both operations are listed as a clinical medical emergency"

"I have been called into the hospital at the last moment and then told half hour later it's being cancelled. This has happened a number of times. I am elderly and have mobility issues. I understand the issues the NHS are currently experiencing, but everything constantly being left to the last moment then cancelled is very stressful for me. Not knowing, anticipating then being let down again. I am in pain and get depressed by the constant uncertainty."

"I was referred to Royal Glam as my records had been lost for 3 years at PCH. My eyesight deteriorated in this time after many cancellations and at one time no Consultant at PCH. the waiting times at Royal Glam are horrendous, I had an appointment yesterday after asking why I hadn't been seen then had to wait for 2 and half hours to see a doctor."

"Was put on pain clinic list 2 years ago still awaiting first appointment "

"No treatment, now housebound and have to use a wheelchair"

118 (98%) of people said that their health and well-being had been affected due to delays in surgery, comments included:

*"very low quality of life"*

*"I cannot always complete daily tasks"*

*"I am blind in one eye which is having an impact on all aspects of life"*

*"Waiting for eye surgery, can take 29 months on the waiting list, could lose my eye-sight by then."*

*"I can no longer do my job and had to give it up. I have a small workplace pension and am not entitled to any other income or benefits as I can't work."*

53 (44%) of people said that they did know who to contact at the Health Board regarding their surgery. People told us

*"I have had to phone to find out what is happening all the time and given the run around all the time. Office waiting list staff never ring back when they say they will. I have been contacted to say I am one of longest waiting patients, but the booking team still haven't booked my surgery."*

*"I have phoned twice, no-one on list is receiving an operation, the list is over 36 months"*

# Learning from what we heard

People share their experiences, good and bad, because they want to make a difference.

Our survey findings showed that people are waiting a long time for their surgery, especially orthopaedic surgery. People were left in pain, and the uncertainty of not knowing if your surgery will go ahead or be cancelled is causing anxiety. Over half of the people who responded have waited over 2 years for their surgery which has a negative impact on their everyday life. People felt that overall, they were not kept informed of changes to their treatment, and that there was nothing put in place to help them manage their conditions while on the waiting place such as pain management. The survey showed that overwhelmingly, people think that their health and well-being has suffered due to the delays in their surgery.

16 out of the 121 people who responded told us that they were waiting for ophthalmology surgery. These were mostly for cataract removal with 5 of those patients waiting over 24 months for their surgery.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board are working hard to recover from the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic. They are trying lots of new things to bring down waiting lists, including the new Wellness Improvement Service (WISE). Waiting lists are increasing daily, as people who did not feel safe enough to visit their GP during the pandemic are now seeking treatment. The devastating impact on many people whose care and treatment has been delayed because of the pandemic is clear. People describe a range of things that affect their day to day lives while they wait, such as having to rely on others, or no longer being able to work.

The Welsh Government's plan to end long waiting times, and the way the NHS responds to deliver the plan, is key to dealing with the things we heard were important to people across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

## **Thanks**

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us. We hope this influences healthcare services to recognise and value what they do well, and take action where they need to as quickly as they can to make things better.

## **Feedback**

We would love to hear what you think about this report, and any suggestions on how we could improve it, to make our future work better. The report is available in Welsh and English.

## Contact details



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<https://twitter.com/CTMCHC>



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If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

**Cwm Taf Morgannwg Community Health Council**