

Hundreds of thousands set to receive spring Covid jabs!

This latest vaccination is being offered to those considered most at risk, following advice from the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation. Those invited should make sure their appointment takes place at least three months since their last dose. Anyone who believes they should be eligible for a vaccine but does not get invited can check online. Alternatively, they can self-declare via the National Booking Service and then speak to a clinician on site. The last spring vaccination appointments will be offered on 30 June. Anyone who turns 75 before then is eligible. Covid-19 vaccinations for everyone who was aged 5 on or before 31 August 2022 will also end after that date, following recent advice from the JCVI. After 30 June, the NHS offer will become more targeted to those at increased risk, usually during seasonal campaigns. There will be around 3,000 sites across England, with the majority of appointments being delivered in communities by pharmacies and GPs.

Dementia Friendly



A Dementia Advisor will be at the Central Hub every Tuesday

10 - 12noon, offering advice and support. We are still taking appointments if anyone wishes to come to The bridge for advice.

Please call 01429 - 868587

The next meeting of the **Hartlepool Mental Health Forum** will be on the 10th May at the Centre for Independent Living, Burbank Street, Hartlepool, at 10am. All are welcome to attend!

Unhappy with your NHS treatment or care?

NHS Advocacy is now provided by North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA), supporting individuals complaining about the NHS.

Freephone: 0808 802 3000. For further information please visit;

www.carersfederation.co.uk

Email: ica@carersfederation.co.uk

Deaf Clients can contact us by text 07789088284 or BSL Whats app video on 07738994040

A member of the Healthwatch Hartlepool team will be in the **Central Hub every Wednesday from 10am till 12 noon**. If you have a question or query or want to talk about an experience of using any Health and social care service, why not pop along for a friendly chat.

For guidance and support on anything related to Covid - 19, please visit the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

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NEWS UPDATE

May 2023

NHS waiting lists reach record levels, but what about the 'hidden waiting list'?

The latest NHS data shows that a record number of people are waiting for care. However, our new research indicates that there is also a hidden waiting list, and more needs to be done to understand what it's like for people trying to get referred.

New NHS data indicates that over seven million people are on waiting lists for specialist clinical care or surgery.

- The waiting list grew to a record 7.22 million in February
- Progress was made seeing people waiting the longest
- But 362,498 appointments require waits of over one year

And 92% of appointments require waits of up to 46.2 weeks

However, according to new research, the NHS has a 'referrals blind spot' as times for getting a GP referral vary considerably.

Our report, which looked at the experience of 1,500 people trying to get a referral to a hospital from their GP, found that it can take time to get on an NHS waiting list with:

- Nearly one in five people (18%) having to attend four or more GP appointments before getting a referral; and
- 11% of people waited over four months from their first GP appointment to being referred.

People who didn't get a referral also reported that their symptoms worsened, impacting their mental and physical health and ability to work.

Most respondents (82%) also said they had tried alternative routes for help after failing to get a referral. These routes included moving GPs, contacting a hospital directly or attending A&E. Responding to the latest NHS data, Healthwatch England's CEO, Louise Ansari said: "Record levels of people waiting for hospital care frustrates patients and puts enormous pressure on NHS staff. But, if you consider those still waiting to be referred, people feel the impact of current challenges long before joining a waiting list. People have told us how difficult it can be to get a hospital referral in the first place. Some wait months due to repeat appointments with GPs before a referral, missing records, and delays once a GP has agreed to make a referral. This hidden waiting list remains largely unknown to the health system.

The result is a large number of people repeatedly returning to their GP, or seeking support from A&E. Combined with the sheer numbers waiting for an operation, consultation, or treatment, this places additional pressure on every part of the NHS, greatly impacts people's lives, and can put patients at risk. Although the NHS is making progress in bring down waiting times, there will be no quick fix and industrial action is making the situation worse. However, it remains vital that people are supported to manage pain and their mental health whilst they wait. And the NHS can do more to understand and improve the referral process, investing in the systems and administrative staff they need to support and communicate with patients while they wait."

Due to the ongoing concerns of patients regarding hospital discharge, Healthwatch Hartlepool have published their report into patient experience of hospital discharge at both the University Hospital of Hartlepool and the University Hospital of North Tees.

To read or download this report, please visit;
www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk

Public satisfaction with the NHS has slumped to its lowest level ever recorded by the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA). Despite this, the public shows very strong support for the NHS

A report by the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA), conducted by the National Centre for Social Research and analysed by The King's Fund and the Nuffield Trust, has been published. It shows that public satisfaction with the NHS has slumped to its lowest level ever recorded by the BSA, with A&E services seeing the biggest year to year increase in dissatisfaction.

Key highlights;

- 29% of people are satisfied with the NHS:
- 35% satisfied with GP services
- 27% satisfied with dentistry
- 30% satisfied with A&E.
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- All figures have got worse since last year, but A&E services recorded the biggest change in public satisfaction and now is among people's top three priorities for improvement.
- The main reasons for dissatisfaction include long waits for hospital GP appointments, staff shortages, and opinions on lack of funding.
- 14% of people are satisfied with social care.

Despite the low satisfaction levels, the public continues to show very strong support for the principles underpinning the NHS.

Healthwatch England national director, Louise Ansari, said:

"It's hugely worrying to learn that public satisfaction in NHS services has now plummeted to its lowest ever level. We know that people are concerned about getting timely access and care from GP teams, dentists and hospital services. But, what is particularly concerning is the decline in satisfaction with the urgent care provided by A&E services.

"This reflects our own research which shows that people were significantly less confident than they were before the pandemic that A&E services would see them in a reasonable timeframe. People are still fairly confident they will receive high-quality care, but worry they will have to wait too long to get it. We also continue to hear from people waiting for hours in crowded waiting rooms, with inadequate toilet facilities, and little or no information on when they will be seen.

"These findings can't be ignored. To help rebuild public confidence it's vital that current and future NHS COVID-recovery plans are properly funded and implemented. The public is clear that they support the principles of the NHS. Now services need to work hand in hand with people to create a healthcare system that is sustainable and designed around patients' needs."

Health trust urges community to respond to cancer symptoms and get checked – after recording positive cancer performance figures

In the latest cancer standards published by NHS England for all NHS health trusts, the Trust has also reported above both regional and national averages in areas including:

- the two-week referral rule
- the 31-day standard (for cancer which has returned)
- the 62-day standard (for both urgent and non-urgent referrals)

Deepak Dwarakanath, Chief Medical Officer, has reminded the public about the importance of responding to symptoms early and attending appointments arranged with health professionals. He said: "Our treatment of patients with an urgent health issue such as cancer is a key priority for us. These figures are so important in providing clear expectations about how long people being urgently referred for suspected cancer should wait to see a specialist and be treated. As the figures show, we are among the best performing trusts in the country for the speed we both diagnose and treat patients with cancer. We are always looking to improve the care we deliver – both in sharing good practice and learning lessons for the future.

We want to remind our community about the importance of attending hospital appointments and follow-up consultations and treatment. Our clinicians and bookings teams work to support our patients in understanding the vital importance of attending their scheduled appointments. Early diagnosis and treatment is absolutely vital to improving health outcomes and saving lives. I also want to thank our staff for their commitment and dedication to ensuring cancer is being diagnosed early and treated promptly." The latest figures are published on the NHS England website.

Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK, The NHS bowel cancer screening kit detects signs of cancer before you notice anything wrong. Detecting it at the earliest stage makes it up to 9 times more likely to be successfully treated.

So if you're aged 60 to 74 (lowering to 50 by 2025), live in England and registered with a GP practice, you'll be sent a kit in the post automatically, every two years.

The kit is quick and simple to complete and can be done in the privacy of your own bathroom using the step-by-step instructions on the box. You only need to collect one tiny sample of poo using the plastic stick provided, pop it in the sample bottle and post it for free, to be tested

The test works by checking for tiny traces of blood, which may not be visible to the naked eye. Blood in your poo is one of the signs of bowel cancer, but does not always mean cancer. Instead, it could be a sign of piles or polyps (growths in the bowel). Polyps are not cancer but could develop into cancer over time.

So if you're sent the kit, help yourself by remembering to complete it. Put it by loo. Don't put it off. <https://youtu.be/umi621tG7ZM>

For more information contact Tees Bowel Cancer Screening Team on 01642 383981 / 0800 0151 506 or the National Helpline free on 0800 707 60 60 website www.nhs.uk