

# Innovation and new technology to help reduce NHS waiting lists

- This week's record investment for the NHS will see the health service deliver an extra 9 million checks, scans, and operations
- Surgical hubs, virtual wards and Artificial Intelligence key to tackling the backlog and putting NHS on sustainable footing
- New treatment, diagnostic, and surgical methods to see more patients quickly and safely

Local surgical hubs, new technology to speed up diagnosis, and innovative ways of working will help the NHS to tackle growing waiting lists and treat around 30% more patients who need elective care by 2023/24.

Backed by a new £36 billion investment in health and social care over the next 3 years, 'doing things differently' and embracing innovation will be the driving force to get the NHS back on track.

The funding will see the NHS deliver an extra 9 million checks, scans, and operations for patients across the country, but it's not enough to simply plug the elective gaps. The NHS will push forward with faster and more streamlined methods of treatments.

Surgical hubs already being piloted in a number of locations, including London, are helping fast-track the number of planned operations, including cataract removal, hysterectomies and hip and knee replacements, and will be expanded across the country. Located on existing hospital sites, surgical hubs bring together the skills and resource under one roof while limiting infection risk and providing a COVID-19 secure environment, with more planned to open in the coming year.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

This global pandemic has presented enormous challenges for the NHS and led to a growing backlog – we cannot go on with business as usual.

We are going to harness the latest technology and innovative new ways of working such as surgical hubs to deliver the millions more appointments, treatments and surgeries that are needed over the coming months and years to tackle waiting lists.

Professor Steve Powis, NHS England medical director, said:

Although the pandemic is still with us and we will have to live with the impact of covid for some time, the NHS has already made effective use of additional resources to recover services — from

adopting the latest technologies to more evening and weekend working, NHS staff are going to great lengths to increase the number of operations carried out.

The further funding announced this week will support staff to deliver millions more vital checks, tests and operations, so if you have a health concern, please do come forward to receive the care and treatment you may need.

The NHS has been trialling a range of new ways of working in 12 areas, backed by £160 million, to accelerate the recovery of services. This includes setting up pop-up clinics so patients can be treated quickly, in person, and discharged closer to home, as well as virtual wards and home assessments to allow patients to receive medical support from the comfort of their home, freeing up beds in hospitals.

GP surgeries are using Artificial Intelligence to help prioritise patients most in need and identify the right level of care and support needed for patients on waiting lists.

Using the latest technology and locally led innovation will increase efficiencies, make every penny count and increase activity levels to tackle rising backlogs. Key examples include:

- Moorfields Eye Hospital has successfully used surgical hubs to reduce the time cataract patients spend in hospital to around 90 minutes and carried out 725 operations in one week, while Nottingham NHS Trust launched 'Super Saturdays' where NHS staff perform that same procedure all day to reduce changeover times for equipment and staff.
- Surgical robots are being used in Milton Keynes hospital to deliver more complex surgery with faster recovery times for patients, less time in hospital and reduced risk of infection. It was the first hospital in Europe to use the Versius Surgical Robotic System for major gynaecological surgery, including complex cancer cases.
- A project launched in Coventry supports the West Midlands Ambulance Service from frail patients and has led to a 20% drop in the number of people over 80 being admitted to hospital when they could have been better cared for elsewhere.
- Doncaster Bassetlaw Hospitals Trust is operating a cardio drive-through service as part of 'Hospital at Home' programme. Patients arrive at Doncaster Royal Infirmary or Montagu Hospital by car and receive an ECG heart monitor device from a member of staff. The new drive-through service means more heart checks can be carried out each day, with around 100 conducted each week, freeing up space in hospital for essential tests which must be carried out face-to-face.

The latest cancer tests being deployed across the NHS are also helping speed up diagnosis and spot cancer early on, and thanks to the hard work of staff, a quarter of a million people were checked for cancer in June – the second highest number on record – and more than 27,000 people started treatment for cancer in the same period.

There are currently a record 5.5 million people waiting for non-urgent treatment and surgery, and around seven million patients in England did not come forward for treatment during the pandemic. The waiting list could potentially reach 13 million by the end of the year if left unchecked and it may take the NHS up to a decade to clear treatment backlogs without concerted action.

The new UK wide £36 billion investment will support the NHS and social care systems in England in the long term and ensure patients have ongoing access to the best possible care.

The NHS will receive an extra £5.4 billion over the next 6 months to support its response to COVID-19. This includes an extra £1 billion to help tackle the COVID-19 backlog, £2.8 billion to cover related costs such as enhanced infection control measures to keep staff and patients safe from the virus and £478 million to continue the hospital discharge programme, freeing up beds.

The additional £5.4 billion brings the government's total investment to health services for COVID-19 so far this year to over £34 billion, with £2 billion in total for the NHS to tackle the elective backlog.

It is also additional to the historic long-term settlement for the NHS, which is enshrined in law and will see NHS funding increase by £33.9 billion by 2023 to 2024 as part of the NHS Long Term Plan.

The health service will come forward with a delivery plan for tackling the backlog to give people confidence that the money being invested is going to deliver results.