

ROUTINE REFERRALS



1. INTRODUCTION

Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Foundation Trust continued to receive two week wait cancer referrals and all other urgent referrals throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

We paused routine referrals to focus on the COVID-19 response, in line with national guidance from NHS England & NHS Improvement (NHSE&I), and we are now working closely with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and with the wider BOB ICS (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) to resume this activity.

All OUH specialties remain open to receive referrals for patients with suspected cancer and referrals which are classified as urgent by primary care colleagues.

As of 10 September, all OUH specialties have re-opened to routine referrals from GPs except in the following challenged specialties:

- Maxillofacial (Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery)
- ENT
- Ophthalmology
- Gynaecology (General and Endometriosis)
- Clinical Neurophysiology
- Bariatrics

The Trust had significant waiting times in these challenged specialties before the COVID-19 pandemic and demand for these services currently exceeds available capacity at OUH .

This is why we are working closely with our NHS and independent sector partners so patients can be seen as soon as possible.

2. ACTIONS BEING TAKEN

- Maximising the use of peripheral clinic capacity because updated Infection Prevention and Control guidance has reduced the number of patients who can be seen safely in hospital outpatient clinics, due to the need to maintain safe social distancing in light of COVID-19
- Planning for running outpatient clinics 7 days per week in some specialties
- Increasing the use of independent sector outpatient capacity for challenged specialties
- Increasing the number of patients who can have 'virtual' appointments eg video consultations, telephone appointments etc
- Working closely with partners across BOB ICS to identify capacity in neighbouring acute hospitals

3. COMMUNICATIONS WITH GPs

- OUH and OCCG are holding a programme of webinars with GP colleagues to discuss issues and maintain open and timely communication between primary and secondary care
- In addition, webinars are also taking place between OUH clinicians and GPs at specialty level
- Regular updates have been provided through OCCG's e-bulletin for GPs

4. LOOKING AHEAD

We understand the frustrations of primary care colleagues and patients that we have been able to open most, but not all, specialties at OUH to routine referrals.

Patient and staff safety is of paramount importance to us and we want to ensure that, as we re-open services, we do so safely.

OUH has made progress over recent weeks to re-open more services to receive routine referrals but we recognise there is more work still to be done within the Trust and with our BOB ICS partners.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

More detailed information is available in papers that were discussed at our Trust Board and Council of Governors meetings on Wednesday 9 September – these are available on our website:

[Trust Board paper](#)

[Council of Governors paper](#)

Dr Bruno Holthof
Chief Executive Officer
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust