

PIDMAS (Alternative Choice) Q&As

What happens to the patient if a provider with a shorter waiting time can't be found?

If an alternative provider is not identified, the patient will be informed and will remain with their current provider.

Who is responsible for informing the patient they could be eligible to switch provider?

The NHS trust or independent sector provider who is currently overseeing the patient's care is responsible for contacting those eligible. If the patient's request progresses, it is the responsibility of the ICB to try and find an alternative hospital appropriate for the patient.

What happens to a patient's position in the original waiting list if they decide to explore their options?

The patient's position on their current waiting list will not be impacted if a new provider isn't identified.

When will other patients on the waiting list be offered an opportunity to switch provider?

Phase one is for patients waiting over 40 weeks. We will widen the offer in a phased approach over the coming months.

Can all patients waiting for treatment over 40 weeks change their provider?

Not all patients waiting over 40 weeks will be invited to request to move provider. Patients who have been waiting over 40 weeks and have an appointment date within the next 8 weeks will be excluded from the process on the basis that it will be quicker for them to remain with their current provider than move to an alternative provider. In addition, there may be some patients whose clinical condition means that it would not be appropriate to move provider. This is particularly relevant to patients whose condition is clinically complex.

How will patients' details be shared with other providers?

Patients are invited to submit their details into the national digital solution (PIDMAS) and select the hospital they are currently under the care of. The patient details will be sent to the hospital for them to be reviewed and then shared with the ICB if the patient is appropriate to move provider.

How long will the process take?

The patient will be told if a new provider has been found or not within five to six weeks of starting the process. If a patient is not clinically appropriate to move it is expected they will be told with two to three weeks.

When will those under 18 be able to change provider?

We will be including patients under 18 in a future cohort.

If a patient who has been waiting over 40 weeks chooses to go to a different provider will they be entitled to expenses for travel and accommodation?

There is the existing NHS Travel Reimbursement Scheme which can be utilised. We have also asked ICBs to ensure that the longest waiting patients who are prepared to travel beyond their local hospitals to receive earlier treatment are not disadvantaged based on their personal circumstances. Each individual will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

After the first outpatient appointment is a patient transferred back to their local NHS trust?

No, the patient will be under the care of the chosen provider throughout their pathway of care until they are discharged. This includes any subsequent appointments. This is clear on the homepage of the PIDMAS website.

When a patient receives the communication is there a time limit for them to respond in?

No. Some patients may respond immediately - others may take weeks to decide that they wish to opt in. There are no restrictions.

If a patient chooses an independent sector provider will there be an additional cost?

There will be no additional cost to the NHS or the patient if they decide to use an independent sector provider.

How will those patients who are not digitally enabled be supported?

A telephone assistance line will be provided in any direct communication to eligible patients.

Can't patients already change provider if they've been waiting over 18 weeks for treatment?

If a patient has been waiting over 18 weeks, they have the right to request to move provider. If a patient has been waiting over 26 weeks, it is the responsibility of the ICB to make every effort to identify an alternative provider to enable the patient to receive earlier treatment. This announcement relates to patients who have been waiting over 40 weeks, and meet the eligibility criteria, as they will now be contacted proactively and asked if they would like to move provider if one with a shorter waiting time can be found.

If a patient chooses to go with a new provider in another area, will they be able to have some of that care organised locally by their GP when it is more convenient (such as blood tests needed by the specialist)?

The care you have been referred for is normally the responsibility of the hospital specialist to arrange, and not the GP. Any tests that your new provider requests would need to be arranged by them. You will need to be prepared to travel to your new provider to have all the tests, investigations, and interventions done that would normally be done by the hospital team. Your local hospital team would be expected to share relevant tests they have already done so there is no unnecessary duplication.