

FOI REF: 22/292

26<sup>th</sup> August 2022

Tel: 0300 131 4500  
Website: [www.esht.nhs.uk](http://www.esht.nhs.uk)

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

I am responding to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. The answers to your specific questions are as follows:

### Part A- Delayed reconstructive surgery backlog

1. **Following the suspension of reconstructive surgery in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic, when was reconstructive surgery restarted within your trust, for:**
  - a. **Immediate reconstruction?**  
  
[April 2021.](#)
  - b. **delayed reconstructive surgery (*by delayed reconstructive surgery we mean reconstructive surgery that happens after a mastectomy as opposed to immediate reconstructive surgery which occurs concurrently*)?**  
  
[April 2021.](#)
2. **What percentage of patients who have been on the waiting list since March 2020 to May 2022 have had their reconstructive breast surgery, for:**
  - a. **immediate reconstruction?**
  - b. **delayed reconstruction?**

[We do not hold this information broken down to this level.](#)

3. **At what proportion of capacity (i.e. average number of patients operated on per month) is the service currently operating at for:**
  - a. **immediate reconstruction?**
  - b. **delayed reconstructive surgery?**

Please see the table below for the number of procedures carried out in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 to date:

<b>Discharges in Calendar Year</b>	<b>Number of Procedures</b>
2019	24
2020	11
2021	11
2022 YTD	9

4. **At what capacity (average number of patients operated on per month) was the service operating at pre-pandemic for (January 2019 – January 2020)?**
  - a. **immediate reconstruction?**
  - b. **delayed reconstructive surgery?**

Please see the table above.

5. **What was the average waiting time for receiving reconstruction in your trust between 2018-2019 (in weeks) for:**

Please see below:

- a. **Free- flap reconstruction**
  - a. **Immediate?**
  - b. **Delayed?**

The Trust does not provide this service. Patients are referred to Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, East Grinstead, for this procedure, contact details as follows:

Email: [qvh.foi@nhs.net](mailto:qvh.foi@nhs.net)

**b. Implant reconstruction**

**a. Immediate?**

**b. Delayed?**

All patients are booked a date within 31 days of the patient agreeing the procedure. The national guidelines are that these patients should be offered a second consultation before reconstruction is undertaken and that is what we offer. Any delays are usually due to patient choice as patients may need more time to choose their type of reconstruction. Delays are not usually due to capacity as there is usually sufficient list capacity for breast surgery except obviously when pandemic restrictions were put in place in March 2020 through to March 2021.

The number of implant reconstructions may have dropped this year as more patients have chosen autologous flaps, e.g. DIEP flaps

**6. What is the current average waiting time for receiving delayed reconstruction in your trust (in weeks) for:**

**a. Free- flap reconstruction**

**a. Immediate?**

**b. Delayed?**

Not applicable, please see above.

**b. Implant reconstruction**

**a. Immediate?**

All patients are booked a date within 31 days of the patient agreeing the procedure. The national guidelines are that these patients should be offered a second consultation before reconstruction is undertaken and that is what we offer. Any delays are usually due to patient choice as patients may need more time to choose their type of reconstruction. Delays are not usually due to capacity as there is usually sufficient list capacity for breast surgery except obviously when pandemic restrictions were put in place in March 2020 through to March 2021.

**b. Delayed?**

None.

**9. What is the current average wait time for additional surgeries (i.e. balancing and correction surgeries) in your trust?**

The average number of weeks each patient is waiting for an inpatient procedure is 19 weeks. Please note that this is based on the speciality of breast surgery and includes all breast surgery procedures.

## **Part B- Reconstructive and balancing breast surgery- procedural limits**

- 1. Does your trust operate under any policies or guidance which place limitations on the number of reconstructive surgical procedures a breast cancer patient is able to access, including limiting the number of balancing surgeries (procedures to the unaffected breast to ensure it matches the reconstructed breast)?**

There are currently no limitations. Patients are offered a full-service including nipple reconstruction and tattoo.

- a. If so, could you please provide details of the limitations and how long they have been in place?**

Not applicable.

## **Part C- Reconstructive and balancing breast surgery- time limits**

- 1. Does your trust operate under any policies or guidance which place limitations on the timescale for surgical procedures a breast cancer patient is able to access, including for balancing surgeries?**

No.

- a. If so, could you please provide details of the policy and how long it has been in place?**

Not applicable.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Should you be dissatisfied with the Trust's response to your request, you have the right to request an internal review. Please write to the Freedom of Information Department ([esh-tr.foi@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.foi@nhs.net)), quoting the above reference, within 40 working days. The Trust is not obliged to accept an internal review after this date.

Should you still be dissatisfied with your FOI request, you have the right of complaint to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Yours sincerely

Linda Thornhill (Mrs)  
Corporate Governance Manager  
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