



NWL Cardiac Network Update

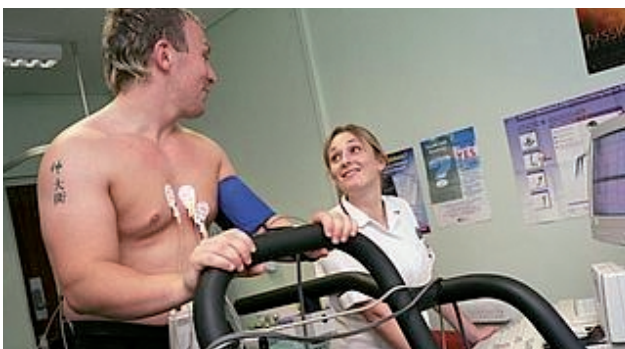
The North West London Cardiac Network (NWLCN) brings together clinicians, other professionals and managers from NHS organisations across NWL to work together to ensure equal access to services and the overall improved outcomes for cardiac patients.

18 Week Patient Pathway

Background: The Department of Health (DH) has set 'an ambitious and ground breaking commitment' that "by December 2008, no one will have to wait more than 18 weeks from GP referral to the start of hospital treatment. For the first time, this includes all the stages that lead up to treatment, including outpatient consultations, diagnostic tests and procedures." (Department of Health, 18-week Patient Pathway, May 2006).

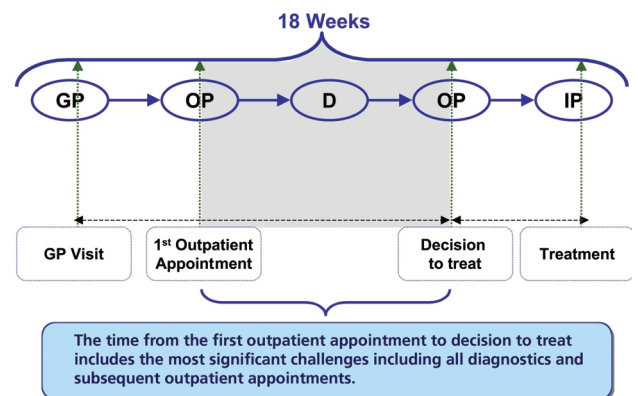
In 2006 the DH released guidance which contained interim milestones to assist progress towards achievement of the 18-week target, together with clarification on principles, definitions and the time frame for delivery of this target.

Work is underway across NW London cardiac centers towards meeting this target. Already, achievement of hospital access targets over recent years has significantly reduced waiting times for patients and this has made considerable in-roads to improving patients' experience of cardiac services. However, continued efforts to reduce waits across the patient pathway – measured as 'Referral To Treatment' (RTT) – is needed to improve patient flows. This card sets out further details of the 18 week target, including RTT interim milestones, measurements and achievements to date across NW London.



18 week patient pathway

The challenge of 18 Weeks



Baseline assessment

In early 2006, the NW London Cardiac Network undertook an assessment of all 11 acute hospitals across NW London to assess cardiac patient pathways and associated waiting times. This exercise flagged up a number of sector-wide priority areas, as well as local service improvements to be undertaken jointly with individual hospitals.

Among the key priority areas highlighted are referral processes across the cardiac care pathway, diagnostic waits and administrative practices. In response the Network has supported the development of small pilot initiatives within individual hospitals to test preferred models in advance of rolling them out across NW London. Examples of these include: modelling of best practice outreach clinics, mapping of referral pathways and waiting list validations. These projects are now underway across the sector as part of an overall strategy to achieve both the interim milestones and ultimately the RTT target, by December 2008.



Stage of Treatment Milestones

The DH has set the following interim milestones:

By	December 2005	March/April 2006	March/April 2007	March 2008	December 2008
Outpatients	13 weeks	13 weeks	11 weeks	5 weeks	
Inpatients	26 weeks	26 weeks	20 weeks	11 weeks	
Diagnostics	-	26 weeks (for Cardiac MRI or Cardiac CT only)	13 weeks	6 weeks	
Choice of Scan for Imaging Diagnostics	Phase 1: 26 weeks for Cardiac MRI or Cardiac CT or another provider	Phase 2: 20 weeks for all imaging diagnostic tests, including ECHO, or another provider	Phase 3: 13 weeks for all imaging diagnostic tests or another provider	Phase 4: to be confirmed	

Achievement of these milestones will be measured through a mandatory process of data appraisal and monitoring. The monitoring process, effective from January 2007, will measure stages in each care pathway. For measurement purposes, care pathways will be classified in one of three categories:

Pathway 1: Referrals resulting in a series of Outpatient appointments leading to an elective admission containing a diagnostic or therapeutic procedure and eventual discharge.

Pathway 2: Referrals resulting in a series of Outpatient appointments, which lead to the establishment of a definitive diagnosis and initiation of appropriate treatment or advice and eventual discharge.

Pathway 3: Referrals resulting in a series of Outpatient appointments, which establish a definitive diagnosis of a chronic disease that may require long-term follow up in Outpatients with or without subsequent admissions and/or diagnosis and/or therapeutic procedure. This pathway is also known as 'watch and wait'.

Choice of Scan

Choice of Scan supports achievement of the 18-week target by ensuring that no patient waits longer than necessary for their diagnostic imaging test. Choice of Scan may be exercised where the originating provider is unable to offer an appointment within the milestone timeframes outlined above. Originating providers have responsibility for Choice of Scan, and this includes the identification of alternative providers and implementation of locally agreed terms.

Data Collection

In working towards the 18-week target, data reporting across the RTT becomes mandatory from January 2007. In preparation for this, a trial data collection exercise was undertaken by the DH in July 2006 to inform the structure of future data monitoring processes. Local analysis of this exercise has highlighted the need for NW London Trusts to assess data capture processes and determine capacity within their diagnostic clinics, in order to identify and implement preferred options for Choice of Scan.

Next Steps

- **Strategy group:** the NW London Cardiac Network is establishing a Strategy group, to agree and implement sector-wide initiatives to support constituent organisations in achieving the 18-week target. For more information about the Strategy group, please contact Jinty Wilson, Assistant Director; at: Jinty.Wilson@hillingdon.nhs.uk
- **Referrals:** Agreement within local health economies over referral processes between health care providers is needed, together with agreed lines of responsibility. The Network can support local health economies in taking this forward.
- **Pathway measurement:** A key area for development across NW London is the implementation of reliable reporting mechanisms. To this end the DH has developed a toolkit to assist this process and to ensure that electronic databases are in place across the sector to facilitate data collation processes. Further details are available at: www.institute.nhs.uk/nodelays.

This card provides an outline of the 18 week target. For further details, please visit www.18weeks.nhs.uk where an abundance of policy guidelines and resources can be found.