Over 50 new surgical hubs set to open across England to help bust the Covid backlogs

Over 50 new surgical hubs will provide at least 100 more operating theatres and 1,000 more beds to deliver millions more operations.

These beds and theatres will help reduce waiting times and offer patients access to vital operations.

Beds will be ring fenced for planned operations, reducing the risk of short-notice cancellations.

Over 50 new surgical hubs will open across the country to help bust the Covid backlogs and offer hundreds of thousands more patients quicker access to vital procedures, the Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay has announced today.

These hubs will provide at least 100 more operating theatres and over 1,000 beds so people get the surgery they need. They will deliver almost two million extra routine operations to reduce waiting lists over the next three years, backed by £1.5 billion in government funding. This breaks down to over 200,000 extra procedures in 2022-23, over 700,000 extra procedures in 2023-24, and one million extra procedures by 2024-25.

They will focus mainly on providing high volume low complexity surgery, as previously recommended by the Royal College of Surgeons of England, with particular emphasis on ophthalmology, general surgery, trauma and orthopaedics (including spinal surgery), gynaecology, ear nose and throat, and urology.
Located on existing hospital sites, surgical hubs bring together skills and expertise of staff under one roof – reducing waiting times for some of the most common procedures such as cataract surgeries and hip replacements. These operations can be performed quickly and effectively in one place. Improving quality and efficiency will mean patients have shorter waits for surgery, will be more likely to go home on the same day, and will be less likely to need additional treatment after surgery.

As the hubs are separated from emergency services, surgical beds are kept free for patients waiting for planned operations, reducing the risk of short-notice cancellations and improving infection control.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

In order to bust the Covid backlogs and keep pace with future demands, we can’t simply have business as usual. Surgical hubs are a really tangible example of how we are already innovating and expanding capacity to fill surgical gaps right across the country, to boost the number of operations and reduce waiting times for vital procedures.

We have already made progress in tackling the longest waiting lists to offer patients quicker access to treatment, and these new surgical hubs will in their own right deliver additional operations over the next three years, including over 200,000 this year alone.

NHS chief executive, Amanda Pritchard, said:

Surgical hubs are a vital part of plans to recover elective services across England and these new sites will be a welcome boost in helping us to further tackle the covid-19 backlogs that have inevitably built up over the pandemic.

The NHS has made significant progress already, virtually eliminating two year waits for care by the end of July and from surgical hubs to robotic surgery, our staff continue to find innovative ways to speed up care for patients.

The hubs will also help address variation in performance
between trusts, as they are required to meet national standards on numbers of operations, the full use of theatre facilities, and ensuring patients are discharged on the same day as their operation. All of this will help to drive up performance across the country.

The government has worked with the NHS to identify which areas will benefit most from surgical hubs. The selection process for surgical hub locations is clinically led and aims to ensure the new hubs are connected to the right local services - such as acute hospital sites - and tackle local healthcare inequalities while promoting the best outcomes for patients and delivering value for taxpayers.

So far, locations for 20 new or expanded hubs have already been confirmed, and bids for the remaining hubs are set to be considered over the coming weeks and months as more business cases are received to determine the new sites meet design standards.

The new hubs will offer a mix of outpatient and admitted (including overnight or day case) surgeries, delivering nearly two million additional procedures over the next three years, equal to 12% of all elective activity in 2019/20. They will encourage the most efficient forms of surgeries, ensuring that fewer patients are kept overnight and saving more time to carry out additional operations.

Currently, 91 surgical hubs have already been opened, meaning that in total more than 140 hubs will be open across England by 2024/25. This includes:

The South West London Elective Orthopaedic Centre contains five state-of-the-art operating theatres and accepts patients from all over the UK. It performs approximately 5,200 procedures a year, 3,000 of which are joint replacements.

Another hub at the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has increased surgical capacity by 25%, with improvement plans now in place to significantly reduce cancellations.

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has cut
down the length of stay for patients undergoing hip and knee replacements, resulting in an average reduction of two days and allowing more people to go home the day after surgery.

The government has committed £5.9 billion in capital investment to support elective recovery in the coming years. Along with surgical hubs, the NHS is changing the way diagnostic services are delivered by opening over 90 community diagnostic centres across the country in locations such as football stadiums and shopping centres.

They have already delivered over 1.6 million checks, tests and scans, offering patients a range of healthcare services closer to home. By 2025, up to 160 will be up and running.

Thanks to these innovative approaches, significant progress has already been made in tackling waiting lists. Earlier this month, the NHS announced that waits of over two years for routine treatment have been virtually eliminated, except where patients chose to wait longer, did not want to travel to be seen faster, or for very complex cases requiring specialist treatment.

This was the first target set out in the Elective Recovery Plan in February and NHS staff continue to make progress on reducing long waits - with a drop of almost one third in people waiting 18 months or more for care since January.

Background

The surgical hubs are funded as part of the £1.5 billion allocated at the Spending Review in 2021. This funding is also upgrading existing hubs.

Regional breakdown of projected additional activity and funding:

Region

Funding

Cumulative Elective Activity (22/23-24/25)
Cumulative Outpatient Activity (22/23-24/25)

East of England
£189m
75000
10900

London
£265m
155600
207800

Midlands
£288m
151700
98300

North East and Yorkshire
£230m
120200
83200

North West
£188m
153400
70300

South East
£218m
*Elective activity refers to day cases and overnights. Outpatients is non-admitted activity, i.e. a procedure that would only be under local anaesthetic.

The additional and expanded 20 hubs announced today are here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>New or expansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>North Middlesex Hospital</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>Western Eye Hospital</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>Purley (Croydon University Hospital)</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

181300
125200
South West
£170m
50700
1700
University Hospital Lewisham
New
London
St Thomas’ Hospital
New
London
The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (Stanmore)
New
London
King George Hospital
New
London
Homerton University Hospital
New
London
Various locations across North Central London (Moorfields)
New
NEY
Friarage Hospital
New
NEY
St. Luke’s Hospital
New
NEY
Dewsbury & District Hospital
New
East
Addenbrooke’s Hospital
New
East
Ipswich Hospital
New
East
Colchester General Hospital
New
North West
Whiston Hospital
New
London
Newham General Hospital
Expansion
London
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Expansion
Midlands
Princess Royal Hospital
Expansion
North West
Westmorland General Hospital
Expansion

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