

Working with the Independent Sector

There are a range of Independent Sector (private) providers available under NHS Free Choice. In addition to the current NHS provision the PCT is working with a range of Independent Sector (private) providers on a number of local contracts to ensure that patients have a wide range of quality services to choose from.

Patients do not have to pay for NHS care provided under these contracts and all Independent Sector providers sign up to NHS cost and quality requirements.

Cheshire and Merseyside NHS Treatment Centre (TC) - Halton

The Cheshire and Merseyside NHS Treatment Centre opened in June 2006 and is the first purpose-built independent sector treatment centre in Cheshire and Merseyside. It is funded by the area's PCTs and the Department of Health, through a contract with the independent provider Interhealth Care Services Ltd. The centre only treats NHS patients.

The Treatment Centre specialises in orthopaedic, diagnostic and surgical procedures.

Wirral is one of the highest referrers to the Treatment Centre with around 1300 patients referred during 2007/08.

Interesting Facts about the Treatment Centre – Did you know:

- The Treatment Centre received 408 referrals from Wirral GPs in last 6 months (January 2008 – June 2008)
- The highest number of procedures during that time (40%) for Wirral patients at The Treatment Centre was arthroscopies (Arthroscopy is a surgical procedure used to inspect and treat problems inside a [joint](#)).
- The average length of stay for joint replacement at The Treatment Centre is only 4.3 days (due to innovative rehabilitation protocols)
- 100% of patients who responded to the monthly patient satisfaction survey would recommend The Treatment Centre to a friend.
- The TC remains and infection free environment with no cases of hospital acquired infections since it opened in 2006 (all patient and staff are screened for risk infection).
- Referrals from Wirral GPs have the highest conversion rate in Cheshire and Merseyside (i.e. number of referrals that convert to a first procedure) which shows the high quality of referrals that are being made.

Spire (formerly BUPA) Elective Care Services Multi Specialty Contract

Wirral PCT continues to be one of the highest referrers to the Multi Specialty Contract with Spire, which offers additional choice/capacity in the specialties of ENT, Urology, Gynaecology, Gastroenterology, Minor Surgery and Orthopaedics.

Classic Hospitals – Bariatric (weight loss) Surgery Contract

A Bariatric (weight loss) Surgery contract set up by NW Specialist Commissioning Team with Classic Hospitals commenced on schedule in October 2007. Surgery will now be available at hospitals in Liverpool, Macclesfield and Hull (complex procedures).

Access to the service is via the PCT Complex Case Team following successful completion of the PCTs approved pathway, including attending the Lifestyle and Weight Management Service for 12 week course.

Fresenius – Renal Services Contract

The Renal National Service Framework (NSF) highlighted the fact that renal failure affects 5-10% of the general population and the patient choice regarding the renal replacement therapy they receive is paramount.

It is known that the number of patients requiring dialysis is increasing by around 8% per annum and that robust plans need to be established in order to meet this growing need.

Cheshire and Merseyside Renal Strategy Group (RSG) produced a 5 year strategic framework based upon a thorough review of existing local services and a projection of need that principally focussed on establishing new facilities in areas with no existing dialysis capacity but recognised that some existing facilities would benefit from modernisation and expansion.

Following a competitive tendering exercise the contract was awarded to Fresenius and achieved financial close on 20 December 07.

Developments in Wirral:

Arrowe Park is one of 3 specialist renal centres in Cheshire and Merseyside. There are currently 7 haemodialysis stations at Clatterbridge dialysis unit caring for around 28 patients.

The unit transferred over to the management of Fresenius Medical care on Monday 4th February 2008 and on transfer new machines, new dialysis chairs and facilities were established in the existing facility.

The existing NHS staff working at Clatterbridge will continue to work in the unit which will be expanded to 12 stations and will move to a new location on the Clatterbridge hospital site. This new unit will be open in early August 2008.

Improving Access to Diagnostics

The PCT Commissioning Department has been working to source additional capacity to enable Wirral GPs to directly access diagnostic services (such as MRI, CT scans, ultrasound etc) with a view to supporting the PCT's strategy to treat more patients outside of hospital, prevent avoidable hospital referrals and where a patient does require referral to secondary care – ensuring that they are more fully “worked up” in primary care before they attend the hospital to help facilitate 18 weeks Referral to Treatment.

In order to introduce an element of choice and plurality of provision the PCT has successfully commissioned capacity from a range of local providers, including Wirral University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH), Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology (CCO) and Countess of Chester NHS Foundation Trust (CoC) and Peninsula Health (new provider)

In addition, the PCT has also negotiated improved accessibility to diagnostic services access for patients in terms of shorter waiting times for appointments and reporting and in the future, access to evening and weekend appointments in some modalities.

Press Release

7 July, 2008

£2 million invested so that Wirral residents can have diagnostic tests faster

Wirral patients can have diagnostic tests such as an MRI or CAT scan much faster now thanks to an investment of more than £2 million by Wirral Primary Care Trust.

Under a new system called GP Direct Access, patients can avoid being referred through the hospital system for the tests. Instead GPs can refer directly in just two weeks and the results are returned within a week. If a hospital referral is needed, patients can choose where they want to go for treatment.

Wirral PCT has invested more than £2 million over the next three years to fund GP Direct Access. Dr. Abhi Mantgani, Medical Director and Lead for Diagnostics, said the new system would remove the worry of waiting for patients living with an undiagnosed condition. “Direct access means exactly that. GPs in Wirral can now refer patients directly for tests that can rule out or recognise problems such as tumours or bleeding within the brain, disc problems in the spine, ligament injuries in joints or tumours within the chest or abdomen. It makes a range of diagnostic services available easily and faster than ever through a choice of providers,” said Dr. Mantgani.

These providers include Arrowe Park Hospital, Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology, the Countess of Chester and a new provider, Peninsula Health, for patients' convenience. ,

The extra funding has also paid for increased capacity in local hospitals for faster access to ultrasound tests and scanning for osteoporosis. Many of these services will be offered in evening or Saturday morning sessions at convenient locations.

Kathy Doran, Wirral PCT's Chief Executive, said "A great deal is being done in Wirral to increase patient choice and improve access to services. Giving patients more say in how, when and where they receive their hospital treatment is what patients tell us they want. We have taken this forward by investing an additional two million pounds over three years to increase the range of diagnostic services that GPs can access directly."

Alan McFerran from Upton was referred by his GP for an MRI scan at Arrowe Park Hospital after developing sciatica. Alan had his test within a week of referral which pinpointed multiple disc prolapses and a compression on his spinal cord which is now being treated. Said Alan: "I had my test on the Sunday and my results were back within forty-eight hours. The difference in the NHS today is just amazing."

Community physiotherapist Jane Harris (pictured) consulted her GP in March after several months of pain and tingling in her fingers. Within three weeks Jane became one of the first patients in Wirral to have a nerve conduction test carried out by Peninsula Health in a medical centre in Birkenhead.

The test measures the electrical activity of muscles and enables early detection or rules out nerve compression and muscle weakness disorders which can be chronic and very debilitating. This confirmed that Jane was suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome (caused by pressure on the nerve that passes through the wrist) and would need an operation.

Said Jane: "I was very impressed by GP direct access. Without it, it would have been a lengthy process between referrals and treatment. The test results were back within a week, ruling out any other problems which was very reassuring. For people without medical training it must be a big relief to have the results back so quickly."

For more information about GP Direct Access or any other developments in Wirral PCT services visit www.wirralpct.nhs.uk or call Wirral PCT's Have Your Say helpline free on 0800 085 1547.

Reducing Audiology Waiting Times

Over the last year hundreds of Wirral residents have benefited from the latest hearing aid technology and an improved patient journey, under a new contract with the independent sector and new ways of working at Wirral Hospital Trust.

The Modernising Hearing Aids Service programme (MHAS) was designed to improve and update the audiology services available to its patients in the NHS. This initiative included increased investment in hearing aid services, through the provision of digital hearing aids, the introduction of information technology based assessment and fitting procedures together with increased rehabilitation time and follow up arrangements.

Like many areas across the Country Wirral saw waiting list for Audiology climb causing long delays for patients due to the large number of people who needed to be changed over from their old analogue hearing aids to the new digital hearing aids. This was compounded by shortages in Audiologists which

has gradually been addressed through increases in the number of people being trained.

As part of the Wirral Primary Care Trust (PCT) plans to deliver a patient-led NHS and to meet targets to cut waiting times by 2008, the PCT invested in a contract with Spire Murrayfield (formerly BUPA Hospitals) to provide Audiology assessments for patients referred by their GP and currently on the audiology waiting list. During 2007/08 all 780 patients on that list were treated.

As a consequence of this contract and a major redesign of how Audiology Services are delivered at Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, waiting list for audiology assessment are now down to 6 weeks.

The PCT is working with a range of providers to introduce a shorter pathway for patients and more choice in where their care is delivered.

Choice of Hospital Leaflet

Here is the Wirral version of the leaflet. Can you ask WHIS to do a page for each of our providers and a page showing "where can I have my treatment" table.