

BOA Statement on waiting times data release from January 2021

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Elective Trauma and Orthopaedic surgery has been severely affected by reduced access to surgery over the past year. In January, services were again particularly badly affected due to the major COVID-19 wave that peaked during that month.

Waiting list figures released today, reflecting the situation at 31st January 2021, reveal the scale of impact for patients:

- Total T&O waiting list: 588,658 – This is the largest total waiting list for over a decade.
- 67,137 T&O patients have been waiting over a year – compared to just 436 in Jan 2020.
- 264,904 T&O patients waiting over 18 weeks

Across all specialties, there are more than 300,000 patients who have been on the waiting list for over a year, but the largest number from any single specialty is that for Trauma and Orthopaedics, which has been disproportionately affected. These long waits include a variety of different procedures – such as adults awaiting hip and knee replacements as well as children needing orthopaedic surgery.

We know that this situation is very difficult for many patients, as they await their surgery in enormous pain and increasing levels of disability. In the case of children, access to timely treatment and post-operative support is important to avoid deterioration and significant levels of disability as they grow up.

We would like to assure our members and all affected patients, that we are working with NHS England and Improvement, as well as many other stakeholders, on getting services back up and running after the difficulties of COVID-19 over the winter, and planning and preparing for tackling the backlog. In December, NHS England identified MSK/orthopaedics as a priority area for this year, in recognition of the challenges faced in this specialty in particular. We are particularly keen to ensure any solution is sustainable over the longer term; included in this is the ability to withstand normal winter pressures and the continuity of training for consultants of the future.

If you are a patient on the waiting list and are struggling with your general health (including both physical and mental health) while you wait for surgery, please consult your GP for advice. If you are on the waiting list and are concerned about deterioration in your orthopaedic symptoms and condition, we encourage you to contact your GP and/or orthopaedic unit so that they can be updated on your condition and arrange further assessment if required.