

15th December 2021

s9(2)(a)

Dear s9(2)(a)

Official Information Act Request for – Treatment Wait Times

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 15th November 2021, you requested the following information:

- **I noted on the Counties Manukau DHB website data re waiting list times in the first half of this year. I was wondering if there was any information re how waiting times have been affected in the latter half of this year, or since lockdown began?**

Counties Manukau Health Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 8,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 601,490 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

- **I noted on the Counties Manukau DHB website data re waiting list times in the first half of this year. I was wondering if there was any information re how waiting times have been affected in the latter half of this year, or since lockdown began?**

In response to your request, the information on the external webpage related to wait times has been updated as at 31st October 2021 and can be found at the following link:

- <https://www.countiesmanukau.health.nz/for-health-professionals/waiting-list/>

Waiting times for planned care services (previously elective services) can be impacted by many factors. Increased demand for planned care services as population growth occurs, acute cases impacting on the delivery of planned care, more complexity and more competition for resources.

During 2020 and 2021, Covid-19 lockdowns have hampered our ability to see patients for assessment face to face and where possible, many have been seen virtually. We have noticed both a decrease and increase in waiting times across services, the reasons for this varies however the main factors that contributed to this are:

- Patients declined appointments as they did not want to attend a hospital environment
- Reduced referral volumes due to a reduction in Primary Care activity
- Increased clinician capacity due to education and annual leave cancellations due to Covid-19
- Requirement to reduce clinic capacity to ensure we maintained physical distancing requirement and address infection control protocols (as lockdown levels eased).

It will take some time to mitigate the loss of clinics during Covid-19 lockdowns. The DHB has a number of initiatives underway to catch up including extra clinics at weekends and evenings.

I trust this information answers your request. You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health