

Ref. No: 0714
Date: 20/02/24
Subject: Cancer Treatment Wait Times

REQUEST

I'd like to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act on cancer treatment wait times at your Trust.

For each of these questions I am looking for figures consistent with those used for the 62-day referral to treatment standard, i.e. how long in calendar days it took for a patient to start treatment after their referral for suspected cancer and diagnosis, as measured from the date of the urgent referral.

1. The number of patients who waited a) over 124 days (i.e. 4 months) and b) over 186 days (i.e. 6 months) between an urgent referral from their GP and starting their first treatment for cancer. Please can you provide figures for each of the past four calendar years (2023, 2022, 2021, 2020).
2. The single longest wait in days for a patient to start cancer treatment, as measured from the date of the urgent referral, in the 2023 calendar year?
3. The current longest wait in days for a patient still waiting to start their cancer treatment, as measured from the date of urgent referral.

RESPONSE

St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust became a single legal entity known as Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust on 1st July 2023, as such parts of the response may be provided in two sections relating to the hospital sites of each of the legacy organisations.

1. The number of patients who waited a) over 124 days (i.e. 4 months) and b) over 186 days (i.e. 6 months) between an urgent referral from their GP and starting their first treatment for cancer. Please can you provide figures for each of the past four calendar years (2023, 2022, 2021, 2020).

St Helens and Knowsley:

No. patients who waited:	2020	2021	2022	2023
Over 124 days	22	22	32	53
Over 186 days	<5	<5	<5	7

Southport and Ormskirk:

No. patients who waited:	2020	2021	2022	2023
Over 124 days	<5	<5	<5	18
Over 186 days	<5	<5	<5	<5

Please note:

- The figures provided include patients treated elsewhere whose pathway started either at St Helens and Knowsley sites or Southport and Ormskirk sites.
- The figures for ‘over 186 days’ are a subset of the figures for ‘over 124 days’.

Section 40: personal information

We are unable to provide precise figures when those figures refer to individuals in volumes of 5 or less due to the risk that individuals will be re-identified, as we are required to protect their identity under the General Data Protection Regulations & Data Protection Act 2018. In such circumstances Section 40(2) and Section 40(3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle which states that personal data should be processed “lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner”. It is the lawful aspect of this principle which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure, and in such circumstances, Section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure.

- 2. The single longest wait in days for a patient to start cancer treatment, as measured from the date of the urgent referral, in the 2023 calendar year?**

St Helens and Knowsley:

233 days

Southport and Ormskirk:

196 days

- 3. The current longest wait in days for a patient still waiting to start their cancer treatment, as measured from the date of urgent referral.**

St Helens and Knowsley:

264 days

Southport and Ormskirk:

143 days

Please note: these patients are on a suspected cancer pathway, which means that cancer has not yet been confirmed, ruled out or a treatment date agreed.