

Questions to Board 25 March 2026

Question 1:

How does the Health Board justify Powys patients waiting up to 104 weeks for surgery in English hospitals, when English patients treated in the same hospitals typically wait around half that time for the same procedures?

Response

Based on the most recent validated waiting times for Powys residents:

- 7,470 patients are on a "referral to treatment" pathways for appointments and procedures provided directly by Powys Teaching Health Board. Of these, 1% are waiting over 52 weeks. I should stress that due to rural and sparsely populated nature of Powys we can only provide less complex procedures within the county that are safe and feasible to provide in a rural community hospital setting.
- 7,739 patients are on a waiting list for other hospitals in Wales. Of these, 15% are waiting longer than 52 weeks and 0.4% are waiting over 104 weeks.
- 12,194 patients are on a waiting list for hospitals in England. Of these, 12% are waiting longer than 52 weeks and 1.1% are waiting over 104 weeks (this mainly relates to some challenged specialties at Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt, such as complex spinal surgery).

Waiting times for Powys residents are therefore broadly comparable between England and Wales hospitals. Health policy in the UK is a devolved matter to each of the four UK home nations. Policies and priorities for residents of Wales are set by Welsh Government who have set the ambition that patients wait no longer than 52 weeks from referral to consultant-led outpatient appointments and 104 weeks from referral to consultant led treatment. We are commissioning in line with the Welsh Government performance framework and also in accordance with the cross-border statement of principles and values between England and Wales which expects that Welsh residents will be treated in English hospitals based on Welsh waiting time targets.

Supplementary question

We understand the challenges of rural care and complex procedures, but we remain concerned that Powys patients in English hospitals are waiting much longer than English patients for the same treatments.

Could you clarify:

- What steps are being taken to reduce these longer waits?
- How the Health Board monitors differences in waiting times between Welsh and English patients for specialist procedures?

For reference, the figures cited relate to the **most recent validated waiting times**. We want to ensure Powys residents have timely and equitable access to care.

Please confirm that the waiting-time figures you provided are based on data taken after 1 July 2025, i.e. after the new cross-border arrangements were introduced in line with Welsh Government policy.

Response:

The actions the health board plans to take in order to maintain and improve waiting times are set out in the draft Annual Plan which was endorsed by the Board at its meeting in public on 25 March 2026 (and a printed copy was shared at the meeting between Adrian Osborne and Better Lives in Powys representatives on 20 March 2026, and it is also available on our website at [Powys Teaching Health Board Annual Plan 2026/27](#)).

I should stress that as this plan does not yet achieve the financial targets set by Welsh Government, they have not yet approved the Annual Plan and require us to set out further action to achieve our financial control total. Further updates on the development and delivery plan will be provided to each meeting in public of the Board, with our next meeting taking place on 20 May 2026 ([20 May 2026](#)).

Welsh Government has set the expectation that in 2026/27 no patient should wait longer than 104 weeks from referral to treatment, and this remains the firm ambition of PTHB in our provider services and in our commissioning of services from other organisations.

The data provided in the previous response from Adrian Osborne reflected the most recent validated waiting times presented to our Finance and Performance Committee in February 2026. The most recent available validated data for Welsh provides at that time reflected the waiting time position as at 31 December 2025, whilst for England providers the most recent validated data was for 30 November 2025.

We publish two-monthly updates on the performance of commissioned services in both England and Wales in our Integrated Quality and Performance Report, which forms part of our public board papers. The Integrated Quality and Performance Report presented to our meeting on 25 March ([25 March 2026](#)) provides a further update to the data provided in my previous response:

- As at 31 January 2026, 7586 patients were on a waiting list for other hospitals (excluding PTHB provider services). Of these, 14% were waiting longer than 52 weeks and 0.4% were waiting longer than 104 weeks.
- As at 31 December 2025, 11932 patients were on a waiting list for hospitals in England. Of these, 12% were waiting longer than 52 weeks and 1.1% were waiting longer than 104 weeks (this mainly relates to some challenged specialties at Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt, such as spinal surgery)

Alongside scrutiny by the Board of these Integrated Quality and Performance reports providing detailed information about the comparative performance on waiting lists in England and Wales, the health board ensures ongoing monitoring and review through a range of mechanisms including:

- Review and scrutiny by the Board's Finance and Performance Committee ([Finance and Performance Committee](#))
- Regular Contract Quality, Performance and Review Meetings (CQPRM) with each provider to seek assurance on the performance of commissioned services.