

9 September 2021

Scoliosis and Spinal Fusion Surgery - Musgrave Park and Royal Victoria Hospitals: Numbers, Waiting Lists and Delayed Surgeries (2019 – 2021)

Q1 - The number of children (under 17-year-olds) that were diagnosed with scoliosis at Musgrave Park Hospital (MPH) and Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) – under your Trust – for the following years: 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021 to present month (August 2021)

Patients with a confirmed diagnosis of scoliosis that requires surgery will be added to the scoliosis inpatient waiting list. The information below outlines the number of children (under 17-year-olds) added to the scoliosis inpatient waiting list by fiscal year:

Number of Children (under 17 year-olds) added to the Scoliosis inpatient waiting list	
Fiscal Year	Number Added
April 2019 to March 2020	74
April 2020 to March 2021	57
April 2021 to July 2021	27

Q2 – How many children diagnosed with scoliosis have undergone spinal fusion surgery at any of your hospitals (RVH, Royal Belfast for Sick Children and MPH) in the years referred to in Q1? Please include the most recent data available.

Number of Children (under 17 year olds) with Scoliosis having spinal fusion surgery	
Fiscal Year	Number having Surgery
April 2019 to March 2020	29
April 2020 to March 2021	10
April 2021 to June 2021	8

Q3 – Please give us the breakdown for each of the years referred to in Q1 in relation to the number of children requiring operation that are on a waiting list for spinal fusion surgery. Please provide the same data for adults. Please include the most recent data available.

The information below relates to all patients on the scoliosis inpatient waiting list and not just those for spinal fusion surgery.

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Total Patients on Scoliosis waiting List at the month end

Hospital	Waiting List as of March 2019	Waiting List as of March 2020	Waiting List as of March 2021	Waiting List as of August 2021
Children (under 17)	49	36	53	43
Adult (17+)	9	10	20	26

Q4 – What is the average waiting time for spinal fusion surgery for children and for adults for each of the years referred to in Q1 (please provide the breakdown for the two categories). What is the longest waiting time for the same period of time and category of patients (adults and children)?

Average waiting time for Patients Admitted for Spinal Fusion surgery

Hospital	2019/20	2020/21	April - June 2021
RVH	31 weeks	32 weeks	43 weeks
RBHSC	32 weeks	27 weeks	26 weeks

Longest waiting time for admission (in weeks)

Hospital	2019/20	2020/21	April - June 2021
RVH	35 weeks	50 weeks	90 weeks
RBHSC	96 weeks	62 weeks	72 weeks

Q5 – How many spinal fusion surgeries for children diagnosed with scoliosis did your Trust have to cancel or delay between 2020 – present (most recent data available)? Please provide the data for the same period of time for spinal fusion surgery for adult patients (above 17 year-olds). If at any point, you had to suspend surgery altogether, please mention the period for 2020 and 2021.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, elective scoliosis surgery was initially suspended in April 2020, in line with Department of Health guidelines. Surgery for elective scoliosis patients was therefore not scheduled, which explains the low number of cancellations noted below. When scoliosis surgery recommenced the number of lists available remained reduced, due to a reduction in theatre and staffing resources and other reasons outlined in Q6 below.

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Operations cancelled and reason

Hospital	Year	Reason	Operations Cancelled
RBHSC	Jan - Dec 2020	Consultant unavailable	<5
		Bed unavailable	<5
	Jan - Jul 2021	Consultant unavailable	<5

Hospital	Year	Reason	Operations Cancelled
RVH	Jan - Dec 2020		0
	Jan - Jul 2021		0

Use of < 5 (less than five): We are unable to provide an exact figure - exempt from release under Section 40(2) of the FOI Act - as this could make patients personally identifiable. Disclosure would constitute a breach of the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

Q6 - Please mention the reasons for having to completely stop, delay and/or cancel surgery for scoliosis patients (and for surgical patients overall).

Reasons for having to delay surgery during 2020 and 2021:

- The Covid-19 pandemic required many theatre staff to be redeployed to other areas, such as ICU; this meant that available theatre slots were reduced and had to be prioritised for urgent, time critical patients. This resulted in cessation of elective surgery.
- Post-operative ICU / HDU beds are required for many scoliosis patients; if these are not available, surgery has to be postponed. ICU / HDU bed capacity remained under significant pressure during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore elective patients requiring ICU/HDU beds could not proceed.
- In July 2020, Belfast Trust Spinal Consultant team was reduced from 8 to 7 WTE staff, due to the sudden loss of one of their esteemed colleagues.

Q7 - How many operating theatres and surgeons do you currently have available that can conduct spinal fusion surgery (for children and adults)?

- There are currently 6 Consultant spinal surgeons who carry out spinal fusion surgery
- Current operating capacity for children and adults:
RVH - 4 x all day lists per month, 2 x Consultants per list
RBHSC - 4 x all day lists per month, 2 x Consultants per list

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Q8 – How many children requiring spinal fusion surgery in the years referred to in Q1 were referred for operations outside Northern Ireland to other hospitals, either in mainland Britain or elsewhere outside the UK? Can you give me a list of which hospitals and how many were sent to them?

Those under 17 year-olds referred for surgery outside the Belfast Trust were as below:

- 2019 - 2020 – Stanmore Orthopaedic Hospital, London 6
- 2020 - 2021 – Stanmore Orthopaedic Hospital, London 10
- 2021 to present month – Stanmore Orthopaedic Hospital, London 9