

27 January 2023

## Breast risk reducing surgery

I would be grateful if you could provide the relevant Trust policy / procedure / guidelines (and signpost to the relevant provision) which confirms:

- **The process that allows a patient to be transferred from one Trust's waiting list to the waiting list for your Trust for risk-reducing breast surgery. This is where the patient has tested positive for BRCA**

The IEAP (Integrated Elective Access Protocol) guidance addresses patient access, with the principle that patients with the same clinical need are treated in chronological order.

Below are the appropriate sections, as well as Scenario 2 in the appendix 15b technical guidance, which sets out how a patient is transferred between Trusts:

IEAP guidance in relation to patient transfers states that;

### **4.12 TRANSFERS BETWEEN HOSPITALS or to INDEPENDENT SECTOR**

4.12.1 Effective planning on the basis of available capacity should minimise the need to transfer patients between Trust sites or to independent sector (IS) providers.

4.12.2 Transfers to alternative providers must always be with the consent of the patient and the receiving consultant and be managed in line with PAS technical guidance, (see also Reasonable Offers, ref. 4.5). Administrative speed and good communication are very important to ensure this process runs smoothly

- **That a patient can be on your Trust's waiting list as well as another Trust's waiting list at the same time for risk reducing surgery**

It is possible that a patient could be on a risk reducing surgery waiting list in another Trust, whilst also on a waiting list in Belfast Trust for the same procedure. The Department of Health have access to information on all waiting lists regionally and would audit lists to try to limit the likelihood of patients waiting for the same surgery across multiple Trusts.

- **That a patient's position on a waiting list can be proposed / paused and confirmation of what circumstances in which it can be postponed / paused (e.g. pregnancy) for risk reducing surgery**

The IEAP Guidance in relation to suspended patients states that;

### **SUSPENDED PATIENTS**

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4.7.1 At any time a consultant is likely to have a number of patients who are unsuitable for admission for clinical or personal reasons. These patients should be suspended from the active waiting list until they are ready for admission.

4.7.2 A period of suspension is defined as:

A patient suspended from the active waiting list for medical reasons, or unavailable for admission for a specified period because of family commitments, holidays, or other reasons i.e. a patient may be suspended during any periods when they are unavailable for treatment for personal or medical reasons (but not for reasons such as the consultant being unavailable, beds being unavailable etc.).

A recommended maximum period not exceeding **three** months.

The exact circumstances in which patients could be suspended for risk-reducing surgery would be up to the clinician.

- **The criteria which determines the order of priority of patients for risk reducing surgery and any other factors affecting this priority which may arise in the future.**

All patients awaiting Breast Risk Reduction Surgery should be prioritised as urgent Priority 2C (Categorised as follows - *Urgent: Suspected cancer (diagnostics procedures (eg EUA + biopsy) - Timeframe <4 weeks*).

Patients awaiting their first procedure risk-reducing Breast surgery are placed onto the inpatient waiting list as 'urgent Priority 2C' and are operated on in chronological order (from the date the patient was placed on the waiting list), although a patient with a confirmed cancer will be a higher priority for surgery and listed as an Urgent 2A Cancer with a limited treatment window or Urgent 2B Urgent: Proven cancer (biopsy proven or cancer in which the diagnosis is clinical/radiological and the surgery provides both treatment and pathological confirmation).

- ***I would be grateful if you could provide the details of the waiting listing times for the following:***
- ***A first appointment with consultant for risk reducing surgery***

A new outpatient referral will be clinically triaged within 24 hours and either placed onto the waiting list for a 'new routine' appointment, unless there is a clinical suspicion of cancer when the patient will be 'red flagged' and seen within 14 days. The current Belfast Trust waiting time for a first appointment with a Consultant Breast Surgeon for a new routine outpatient appointment to discuss risk-reducing surgery is approximately 2 months.

- ***A pre-operation appointment for risk reducing surgery***

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An appointment for pre-operative assessment will usually be provided by the Inpatient/ Daycase Waiting List Office 1-2 weeks before the date of the risk-reducing surgery, when this is known.

- ***A clinical psychologist and breast care nurses appointment in relation to risk reducing surgery***

Regarding the current Belfast Trust waiting time for a first appointment with a Clinical Psychologist, patients for risk reducing surgery assessments are added to the general waiting list for psychology input for cancer services. Normally, referrals would be seen within 2-3 months, but current waiting times are longer due to staffing capacity issues. If the Breast Surgery team makes contact with the Clinical Psychology team, to ask if a referral can be prioritised because of imminent surgery, every attempt is made to support this request, but there is also a shared understanding with the surgeons that the lack of a psychological assessment with clinical psychology should not prevent surgery from taking place.

Regarding Breast Care Nursing, to discuss risk-reducing Breast surgery, on receipt of a referral, these patients are allocated an appointment at a nurse-led reconstruction clinic and these appointments are booked on an ad-hoc, as required basis. The actual time period for appointment depends on the demand on nurse-led appointments at that time, as these vary from month to month.

- ***The risk reducing surgery and reconstruction.***

All 'Priority 2' patients should be operated within 4 weeks of the patient going onto the waiting list for surgery. From a review of the Belfast Trust inpatient waiting list, the approximate waiting time for Breast risk-reducing surgery is currently several years. As at the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023, there are currently 29 patients on the Belfast Trust waiting list for this surgery, with 1 patient waiting from 2018; 6 patients from 2019; 6 patients from 2020; 5 patients from 2021 and 11 patients from 2022.

The excessive waiting times are due to lack of available operative capacity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and patient surgery being delayed as a result. The Trust is currently rebuilding its theatre capacity and hopes to reduce the waiting times for surgery as a result.

- ***I would be grateful if you could provide the details of the Trust email addresses, contact telephone numbers and secretary details for the surgeons which carry out this risk reducing surgery.***

Ms. Samantha Sloan – Secretary can be contacted on Tel: 028 9504 8195 or 028 9504 8366

Mr. Gareth Irwin – Secretary can be contacted on Tel: 028 9504 8390

Mr. Peter Mallon – Secretary can be contacted on Tel: 028 9504 3686

We have not provided the secretary details apart from the office contact numbers as we are not able to provide personal information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI). This information is subject to Section 40(2) of the FOI Act 2000 –

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Personal information relating to a third party. This is deemed to be personal information about another individual and disclosure would breach one or more of the principles of the Data Protection Act.

It is the protocol of Belfast Trust to make public the names of employees of a senior standing – i.e. Band 8A and above. Those who fall below that band are exempt and so their names have been omitted.

- ***I would be grateful if you could provide the details of how many people in total are on the waiting list for risk reducing surgery.***

As of 24/11/2022, there are 21 patients awaiting an initial procedure with BRCA in its description.

**I would be grateful if you could confirm how many risk reducing surgery procedures have been carried out over the last 5 years..... I would be grateful if you could confirm the average age of women receiving this surgery over the last 5 years.**

Dates	Total	Average Age
01/04/2017 - 31/03/2022	67	40 years old

**....and how many procedures had the ovarian risk reducing surgery carried out at the same time? I would be grateful if you could confirm the average age of women receiving this surgery over the last 5 years.**

Dates	Total	Average Age
01/04/2017 - 31/03/2022	10	40 years old