



## THE 18-WEEK RULES SUITE - NATIONAL CLOCK RULES

### Clock Starts

1. An 18-week clock starts when any care professional or service permitted by an English NHS commissioner to make such referrals, refers to:
  - a) a consultant led service, regardless of setting, with the intention that the patient will be assessed and, if appropriate, treated before responsibility is transferred back to the referring health professional or general practitioner;
  - b) an interface or referral management or assessment service, which may result in an onward referral to a consultant led service before responsibility is transferred back to the referring health professional or general practitioner;
2. An 18-week clock also starts upon a self referral by a patient to the above services, where these pathways have been agreed locally by commissioners and providers and once the referral is ratified by a care professional.
3. Upon completion of an 18-week referral to treatment period, a new 18-week clock only starts:
  - a) when a patient becomes fit and ready for the second of a consultant-led bilateral procedure;
  - b) upon the decision to start a substantively new or different treatment that does not already form part of that patient's agreed care plan;
  - c) upon a patient being re-referred in to a consultant-led; interface; or referral management or assessment service as a new referral;
  - d) when a decision to treat is made following a period of active monitoring;
  - e) when a patient rebooks their appointment following a first appointment DNA that stopped and nullified their earlier clock

### Clock Pauses

4. A clock may be paused only where a decision to admit has been made, and the patient has declined at least 2 reasonable appointment offers for admission. The clock is paused for the duration of the time between the earliest reasonable offer and the date from which the patient makes themselves available again for admission.

### Clock Stops

#### Clock stops for treatment

5. A clock stops when:
  - a) First definitive treatment starts. This could be:
    - i. Treatment provided by an interface service;
    - ii. Treatment provided by a consultant-led service;
    - iii. Therapy or healthcare science intervention provided in secondary care or at an interface service, if this is what the consultant-led or interface service decides is the best way to manage the patient's disease, condition or injury and avoid further interventions;



- b) A clinical decision is made and has been communicated to the patient, and subsequently their GP and/or other referring practitioner without undue delay, to add a patient to a transplant list.

Clock stops for 'non-treatment'

- 6. An 18-week clock stops when it is communicated to the patient, and subsequently their GP and/or other referring practitioner without undue delay that:
  - a) It is clinically appropriate to return the patient to primary care for any non consultant-led treatment in primary care;
  - b) A clinical decision is made to start a period of active monitoring;
  - c) A patient declines treatment having been offered it;
  - d) A clinical decision is made not to treat;
  - e) A patient DNAs their first appointment following the initial referral that started their 18 week clock, provided that the provider can demonstrate that the appointment was clearly communicated to the patient<sup>1</sup>.
  - f) A patient DNAs any other appointment and is subsequently discharged back to the care of their GP, provided that:
    - i) the provider can demonstrate that the appointment was clearly communicated to the patient;
    - ii) discharging the patient is not contrary to their best clinical interests;
    - iii) discharging the patient is carried out according to local, publicly available, policies on DNAs.
    - iv) These local policies are clearly defined and specifically protect the clinical interests of vulnerable patients (e.g children) and are agreed with clinicians, commissioners, patients and other relevant stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> DNAs for a first appointment following the initial referral that started an 18-week clock nullify the patient's clock (i.e. it is removed from the numerator and denominator for Referral to Treatment time measurement purposes).