

Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust provides a range of acute services at Queen Alexandra Hospital and a number of peripheral sites. The Emergency Department at Queen Alexandra Hospital is one of the busiest in the UK treating in excess of 100,000 patients each year and hosts the largest Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit (MDHU) in the country.

Choose and Book in the Urology department



Stuart Hall trained as a urological surgeon in Wessex and the Royal Air Force, receiving sub-specialist training in urological oncology. Having served 18 years in the RAF, deploying to varied areas of the world, he now works, in a civilian capacity as the Clinical Director of Portsmouth Urology, specialising in general urology, oncology, overactive bladder and voiding dysfunction/urodynamics, in addition to management and departmental development.

The urology department consists of six full-time consultants and one part-time, all of whom have access to Choose and Book. The majority of urology services are available through Choose and Book, including nurse-led clinics. The trust is currently looking to roll out two week wait services through Choose and Book to maximise the availability of their services.

The trust is also moving towards becoming a 'paper-free' organisation and this principle is supported by the urology team who all review their Choose and Book referrals online. Stuart and the team feel that it is far easier and quicker to review their referrals electronically, all the information is readily available and there is no risk of referral details getting lost as they often do with paper referral letters.

The team have worked with the Choose and Book leads in the trust to develop their Directory of Services with the result that the rate of referrals which need redirecting or rejecting is very low, as patients are generally referred and booked into the correct clinics. If a trend in patients going to the wrong clinic is noticed, then the team would work with the central Choose and Book team to review the Directory of Services template for that particular service. SNOMED terms were added when introduced to Choose and Book and have been reviewed and updated since.



Advice and Guidance is also offered through Choose and Book and the team respond to these directly when reviewing referrals and managing their worklists. The trust and department have recently evaluated the consultants' job plans and time is now used for managing Choose and Book within allocated administrative sessions. This will be regularly assessed as the number of referrals and Advice and Guidance (A&G) requests into the department increases.

The Trust has recently had a Choose and Book training programme for their consultant teams, with the majority now having Smartcards and had training on the system, with a view to moving the organisation further along the path to becoming 'paper-free'.

The urology team have certainly seen benefits to their working practices through using Choose and Book, and Stuart feels that "on the whole reviewing referrals through Choose and Book is quicker and safer than the paper process, with referral information never getting lost, and the knowledge that the patient already has their appointment is reassuring".

Laura Taw is the Administrative Manager for the Surgical Clinical Service Centre which includes urology. Within the areas that she covers there are differing processes, with several teams now also using Choose and Book to review referrals and respond to Advice and Guidance requests.

She sees many benefits in the Choose and Book process over the traditional paper process, Laura explains: "Choose and Book gives GPs, patients and consultants direct involvement in the referral and booking process and enables patients to have a choice about where they go for their treatment".

There are other benefits that Laura and her colleagues have noticed for the Choose and Book referrals: they are usually more appropriate, the role of the admin team is easier as everything is done instantly – patients are booked and registered on the Patient Administration System for example, the referral letter is always accessible, they don't have to search the department as often happens with paper referral letters. This is especially important if the patient has been booked at short notice, or if a clinic has to be re-scheduled at short notice.

"Of all the services we manage, Urology is the simplest, as the consultants use the Choose and Book system themselves!" adds Laura.