

26 November 2024

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Tēnā koe Yasir

Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00062031

Thank you for your email on 16 September 2024, asking Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

- 1. The current average wait time for paediatric clinic appointments across Auckland*
- 2. The number of children currently on the waitlist for paediatric clinic appointments in Auckland*
- 3. The criteria used to prioritize patients for appointments in paediatric clinics.*
- 4. Any measures being implemented to reduce wait times for paediatric clinic appointments.*
- 5. Historical data on wait times for paediatric clinic appointments over the past five years, if available.*
- 6. According to the Service Level Agreement (SLA), what is the expected or standard wait time for paediatric clinic appointments? How does the current wait time compare to this standard?*
- 7. If the current wait time exceeds the SLA standards, please provide details on the steps being taken to address this issue. Additionally, what actions have been taken in response to reported delays?*
- 8. Please include any relevant reports, documents, or data that pertain to the above questions.*

Response

We wrote to you to ask you to clarify which clinic you sought information about. You replied that:

I am requesting information for the Auckland paediatric clinic.

We have interpreted your clarified request as seeking information about General Paediatrics at Health New Zealand Waitematā and Auckland. Please note that this data is provisional and used for operational purposes. It has not been through the full quality assurance process that we use before publishing data and therefore is subject to change.

I will treat each of your requests in turn, by local area starting with Waitematā.

Waitematā

The current average wait time for paediatric clinic appointments

The average waiting days of those recently (i.e., in the last 3 months) removed from the First Specialist Assessment (FSA) waitlist is 103 days.

The number of children currently on the waitlist for paediatric clinic appointments in Waitematā

There are 2,001 children on this waitlist as of 01/11/2024

The criteria used to prioritize patients for appointments in paediatric clinics.

Referrals are triaged by a combination of an experienced nurse and a team of paediatricians. The service has triage outpatient guidelines available to this team to standardise processes and response. There is peer review to improve consistency of practice.

Cases are assessed individually and assigned a priority:

- P1 – usually seen immediately in emergency department, or acutely in our “PACE” clinic at North Shore
- P2 – see within 6 weeks – cases where there is identified clinical reasons why prompt assessment is warranted
- P3 – see within 4 months - important clinical conditions where deterioration is not anticipated. This includes most neurodevelopmental conditions
- P4 – non-contact FSA, usually done at time of referral with individualised advice provided back to the referrer.

Any measures being implemented to reduce wait times for paediatric clinic appointments.

Waitematā has implemented several measures including:

- making extensive use of non-contact FSA, providing timely advice to GP at time of referral.
- It has developed a Nurse Practitioner intern program to increase capacity in general paediatrics.
- regular clinical review of the patients on waitlist and the provision of community supports.
- It provides guidance to team members about appropriate follow up and reduction of follow up wait lists.

Waitematā also uses follow ups to reduce workload and, in addition has a regional neurodevelopmental project to redesign services and standardise processes across region.

According to the Service Level Agreement (SLA), what is the expected or standard wait time for paediatric clinic appointments? How does the current wait time compare to this standard?

The national expectation is for new referrals to be seen within 4 months. There is no Service Level Agreement or target for wait times

If the current wait time exceeds the SLA standards, please provide details on the steps being taken to address this issue. Additionally, what actions have been taken in response to reported delays?

Please refer to our response above regarding SLAs.

The increase in wait times is correlated to a period of significant Resident Medical Officer (RMO) vacancy regionally. Waitematā currently has five out of 11 RMO positions vacant and Senior Medical Officer (SMO) resource has been redistributed to acute services to maintain clinical safety.

Additional SMO FTE has been appointed and three Nurse Practitioner Interns are being supported to assist in meeting this demand. In addition, we would note that the measures under question 4 have been implemented.

Please include any relevant reports, documents, or data that pertain to the above questions.

There were no reports or documents within scope and this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist.

The data relevant to your questions would have to be extracted from Waitematā's patient management systems. Health NZ is unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, our staff would have to manually review several thousand patient files. As such, we refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act.

I have considered whether fixing a charge for the supply of the information or extending the timeframe for response would enable Health NZ to respond. I do not consider that either option would remove the impact that supplying the information would have on our other operations

Auckland

The current average wait time for paediatric clinic appointments across Auckland

The average wait time for patients seen for their FSA in September 2024 was 112 days.

The number of children currently on the waitlist for paediatric clinic appointments in Auckland

As at the end of September 2024, there were 946 patients on the General Paediatrics Clinic waitlist for their FSA

The criteria used to prioritize patients for appointments in paediatric clinics.

Clinical need and urgency dictates priority. For example, if a child is unable to attend school due to their condition, they would receive a higher priority.

Any measures being implemented to reduce wait times for paediatric clinic appointments.

When appropriate Auckland provides GP/referrer advice electronically within a week of receiving referrals – that provides very timely advice and avoids the need for a clinic visit.

Auckland avoids unnecessary follow ups to free up clinic time for new referrals. They also add extra clinics when resources allow.

Auckland maximises the use of clinic time avoiding gaps in clinics, has mechanisms in place to reduce missed appointments, uses alternative care models (delivered by community-based nurse practitioners) to supplement traditional clinics. These initiatives have reduced rates of missed appointments to less than 10 percent.

Historical data on wait times for paediatric clinic appointments over the past five years, if available.

Appointment Year (calendar year)	Average Days Waiting for patients seen at clinic for First Specialist Assessment
2019	38.5
2020	37.8
2021	45.4
2022	41.8
2023	67.1
2024 (to 30/09/24)	100.3

According to the Service Level Agreement (SLA), what is the expected or standard wait time for paediatric clinic appointments? How does the current wait time compare to this standard?

The national expectation is for new referrals to be seen within four months. There is no Service Level Agreement or target for wait times.

We can advise that current wait times for standard (non-urgent) referrals to be seen in clinic is approximately 10 months. Virtual advice to referrer is done within a week. Urgent clinic referrals are seen within weeks.

If the current wait time exceeds the SLA standards, please provide details on the steps being taken to address this issue. Additionally, what actions have been taken in response to reported delays?

Please refer to our response above regarding SLAs.

Auckland identifies and tracks wait list metrics, it reviews all follow ups to determine whether they are required or not. The service is also clear with referrers to advise them of current waiting time status. This helps referrers make informed referral decisions and in sharing information regarding urgency. Auckland seeks to provide more clinics via additional resource requests.

Please include any relevant reports, documents, or data that pertain to the above questions.

There were no reports or documents within scope and this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist.

The data relevant to your questions is provided in our response to your question seeking historical data above.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at h.nzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Coe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'D'.

Danielle Coe

**Manager (OIA) Government Services
Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora**