

# 18 Weeks and Choose and Book

**By December 2008, the longest any patient will wait for non-emergency treatment will be 18 weeks from referral to treatment. This will significantly improve the patient experience and completes the journey on tackling non-urgent waiting times.**

Choose and Book enables the secure referral of patients, and allows them to make appointments at times and places that are convenient to them. It is also an enabling tool to help measure and deliver the 18-week pathway by:

- increasing efficiencies in the hospital, such as DNA rates;
- helping patients be seen more quickly by reducing waiting times; and
- providing a 'clock start' date from which 18-weeks is counted.

The following frequently asked questions cover the main questions which are asked about the the use of Choose and Book and 18 Weeks. If you require more information on 18 Weeks you can visit the 18 Week website at [www.18weeks.nhs.uk](http://www.18weeks.nhs.uk).

## 18 Weeks and Choose and Book: Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why is Choose and Book important to the 18 weeks target?

Choose and Book will be instrumental in helping to measure and manage 18-weeks' pathways for patients. It will be the most secure method of electronic referral – one suitable for a modern NHS and one that supports better referral pathways. Tracking the progress of referrals is automated, leading to considerable potential savings in administrative time and a reduction in delays and uncertainty for patients. It is impractical for such the NHS to rely upon paper transfer of referrals.

### 2. How does Choose and Book affect the 18 weeks clock start date and pathway identifiers?

For referrals made through Choose and Book, the clock starts on the date the patient converts their unique booking reference number (UBRN), either directly from the referral point (e.g. GP practice) or via the Telephone Appointments Line service (TAL) or the internet.

By December 2008, the expectation is that all 18-week referrals will be made through Choose and Book. Until this time, the clock start for non-Choose and Book referrals will occur on the date that the referral letter is received by the provider.

Following receipt of the appointment request details from the TAL, Trusts have established processes to contact patients to arrange their appointments in accordance with the timescales outlined in the letter sent to SHA Directors of Performance in November last year. It is essential that Trusts treat appointment requests forwarded through this process as they would an urgent referral. For the purpose of waiting times, the clock start date for providers will be the date that the patient has experienced slot unavailability when they have called TAL.

### 3. What tools are available to help manage capacity for 18 week waits and Choose and Book?

A key tool for 18 weeks management is a Provider Access Model to support local health economies with outpatient capacity planning. It helps providers to resolve outpatient capacity blockages to meet and sustain maximum wait targets and in doing so will allow full and direct Choice and Booking.

The Provider Access Model can be used to estimate whether additional outpatient appointment capacity is needed to achieve and sustain any maximum wait target at specialty, subspecialty and/or consultant level. The model will quantify any gaps between capacity and demand and can support the development of action plans to close those gaps.

This tool is available at: [www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff/implementation](http://www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff/implementation).