

Wairarapa orthopaedic first specialist assessments and elective treatment

Due to MO:	13 March 2025	Reference	HNZ00081205
To:	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
From:	Mat Parr, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Te Ikaroa I Central Region		
Copy to:	n/a		
Security level:	In Confidence	Priority	Routine
Consulted	n/a		

Contact for further discussion (if required)			
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Attachments	
Appendix 1:	Acute and sub-specialist care arrangements
Appendix 2:	Information Request: Orthopaedic Performance Wairarapa Summary 26 February 2025 [provided to Minister in week ending 28 February 2025]

Purpose

1. This paper details the plan for Wairarapa District to ensure they achieve the 2024/25 milestones for orthopaedic First Specialist Assessments (FSAs) and 2024/25 and 2025/26 milestones for orthopaedic elective treatment.

Orthopaedic waitlists and delivery required to meet milestones

Current waitlists

2. As of 10 March 2025, the orthopaedic waitlists are as follows:
 - a) 601 patients are waiting for a FSA, and 37 of these patients have been waiting over 365 days.
 - b) 156 people are waiting for orthopaedic surgery, with 123 of them waiting over 120 days. Fifty-four of the people waiting for orthopaedic surgery have been waiting over 365 days.
3. The history to the current pressure on the orthopaedic waiting lists, which is due to the loss of Senior Medical Officers (SMOs) and inability to recruit, is included in the background in Appendix 2.

Delivery needed to meet next milestone target

4. Based on current forecasting, the following treatment volumes need to be delivered by 30 June 2025 to meet the current milestone target of 67% of patients treated within 120 days.

122 cases

- insourced: 91 cases
- outsourced: 31 cases

5. The outsourced figure of 31 is what Wairarapa identifies is needed to be delivered by private providers to meet the 30 June milestone. Discussions are underway with the private providers to determine how much regional capacity Wairarapa can access for these orthopaedic volumes, most likely to be delivered in by providers in Wellington and Palmerston North.
6. Additionally, the following FSA volumes are required to meet the milestone target of 67 percent of patients receiving an FSA within 120 days:

106 FSAs

- These will be done in-house within the next few months.

Orthopaedic delivery plan

7. Actions have already been taken to increase capacity. The following recruitment, regional support and outsourced contracting is in place or underway to ensure delivery against milestones, as well as meeting business as usual acute demand (acute and sub-specialised care arrangements are unchanged, see Appendix 1).

Current local service capacity

8. Unlike other district hospitals, the challenge for Wairarapa is not the constraint of theatre time, but instead the ability to access orthopaedic surgeons to deliver surgery in Wairarapa.
9. Ambulatory care and elective surgery for orthopaedics are managed and provided locally out of Wairarapa Hospital within the current surgical resource:
 - a full-time orthopaedic (non-training) registrar.
 - a 12-month fixed-term surgeon (started January 2025) delivering 0.6 FTE (three days per week).
 - a permanent surgeon working clinically two days per month in Wairarapa (commenced February 2025).
 - locum cover is contracted on an 'as available' basis (currently up to one day per week - two operating sessions).
10. From the above surgical resources, the following activity is delivered weekly:
 - three half-day fracture clinics (acutes).
 - one full-day of orthopaedic surgical procedures equating to four planned surgical cases.
 - one full-day outpatient clinic equating to approximately 10 FSA appointments.
11. This current level of activity is insufficient to meet the agreed 2024/25 milestone.

Additional resources being put in place

12. To meet the milestone target for treatment based on current forecasting, approximately eight surgical procedures per week are required in the Wairarapa, double what is provided now. This requires the equivalent of another full day of SMO capacity to be provided weekly.
13. To ensure there is sufficient capacity to deliver the targets, both to June 2025 and into 2025/26, we are taking the actions outlined in the table below.

	Action	Date
1.	Surgeon recruited for 12 months (0.6 FTE)	Commenced January 2025
2.	Surgeon recruited (0.1 FTE)	Commenced February 2025
3.	Increased locum capacity	Commenced February 2025
4.	Additional orthopaedic resource sourced from Capital Coast & Hutt Valley district	End March 2025
5.	Outsourcing of the additional 31 procedures in Wellington and Palmerston North confirmed	End March 2025
6.	Two new surgeons commence at Wairarapa district (two	End August 2025

	days per surgeon, per month, in Wairarapa each)	
7.	A further new surgeon commences at Wairarapa district (two days per month in Wairarapa)	End September 2025

14. The addition of three additional surgeons (actions 6 and 7 above), will be sufficient to provide two full days of outpatient clinics per week and two full days of surgery per week. Based on current forecasting, this level of service capacity will be sufficient to meet local service demand and reduce waiting times to required levels.
15. The introduction of this sub-regional orthopaedic service with permanent staff will also remove the need for the current ad hoc arrangements and will enable a sustainable long-term operating model for orthopaedic services in Wairarapa and ensure that the district can deliver its required in-house orthopaedic FSA and treatment volumes ongoing.
16. In addition, if Wairarapa can gain accreditation, training registrars will also be an option for the future and will support further additional volumes. Progressing to accreditation will require engagement and support of the Medical Council and colleges.

Appendix 1: Acute and sub-specialised care arrangements

Acute orthopaedic surgery is not currently provided out of Wairarapa Hospital. It is managed and provided remotely from Wellington Regional Hospital:

- Patients who present to the Wairarapa Hospital Emergency Department (ED) with an acute orthopaedic issue are assessed and treated as per ED protocols. If clinically indicated, they are referred to the local fracture clinic for assessment and follow up, or referred to Wellington Regional Hospital for acute assessment +/- surgical procedure.
- During business hours, the Wairarapa-based Orthopaedic Registrar does assessment in ED and liaises with the Wellington service to agree a treatment plan.
- There has been no rostered after-hours on-call orthopaedic resource based in the Wairarapa since 2022. After-hours, the Wellington on-call senior Registrar and Senior Medical Officer are available to ED clinicians. They have access to review clinical diagnostics and work collaboratively with ED to develop appropriate treatment plans for patients. There is currently no proposed change to this model.

Regional conversations have been held with Hutt Valley and MidCentral teams, with a view to extending the after-hours cover for the Wairarapa to share the workload currently on the Wellington-based team. This plan is awaiting finalisation.

Some acute, on the day, procedures have been completed locally as Senior Medical Officer resource has allowed, to reduce the travel impact on patients and whānau. This will continue once local Senior Medical Officer resourcing improves.

There are patients who require sub-specialised treatment. These services are provided from Wellington Regional Hospital and include spinal, paediatric or other higher-risk procedures. This is a long-standing regional clinical pathway that is not proposed to change.

Appendix 2: Information Request [provided to Minister week ending 28 February]

Orthopaedic Performance Wairarapa Summary 26 February 2025

This information responds to your request for information on orthopaedics at Wairarapa district prior to your visit this afternoon.

Background

Prior to 2020, three full-time orthopaedic surgeons were employed at Wairarapa.

These three surgeons delivered approximately 900-1,000 operations per year (25% acute, 75% planned acute and elective) and about 2,000 outpatient appointments.

In 2020, one of these surgeon's retired and one resigned to work exclusively in private.

Recruitment to replace these two surgeons commenced in 2020 and into 2021, however it proved unsuccessful. Two MOSS appointments were made instead, to work under the supervision of the remaining full-time surgeon.

Due to being unsuccessful in recruiting, it was decided to stop all acute services on site at Masterton hospital. Instead, the acute flow would be supported by Capital Coast, with supplementary support by Hutt Valley, and to a more limited extent MidCentral. In addition, the Wairarapa SMO budget and recruitment responsibility transferred to Capital Coast.

From 2022 to date, Capital Coast has become the main provider of orthopaedic support. They employed one surgeon, followed by another surgeon who was completing vocational registration, along with a Registrar to be based in Wairarapa, with periodic support by other visiting orthopaedic surgeons.

Further issues arose in 2024 when two of these surgeons resigned. This left Wairarapa with only a Registrar, requiring supervision.

Current Situation

Most acute orthopaedic work is assessed in Masterton Hospital ED and sent to Wellington for surgical treatment if required.

All ambulatory care and elective surgery is managed locally in Masterton, subject to a Wellington surgeon being present, with all supporting / ancillary support available in the Wairarapa (including theatre capacity, in-patient beds, nursing and allied health staff and outpatient clinic).

From January this year, current resourcing includes:

- An interim fixed-term surgeon who delivers 0.6 FTE to Wairarapa.
- A permanent surgeon offering two days per month in the Wairarapa (commenced this month).
- Ad hoc surgeon capacity in Wairarapa - independently sourcing locums for one day per week (two operating sessions). This will be extended depending on availability.
- From August 2025, two additional surgeons will commence offering two days per month. This will bring capacity up to two days every week operating on site.

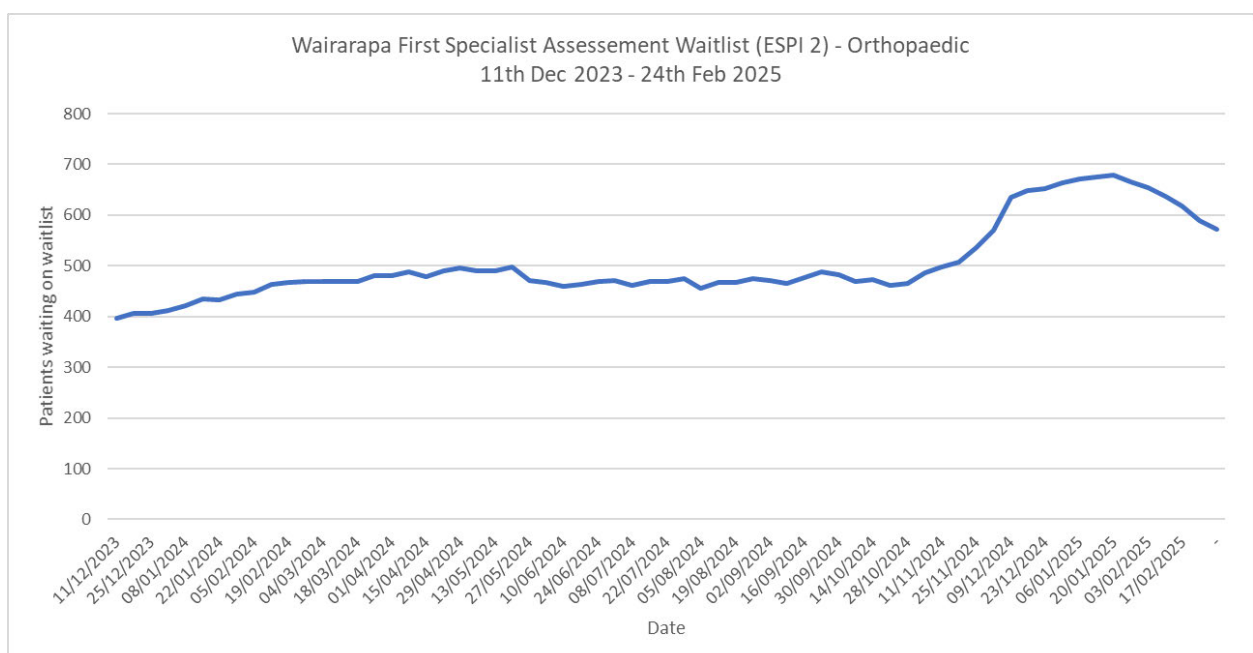
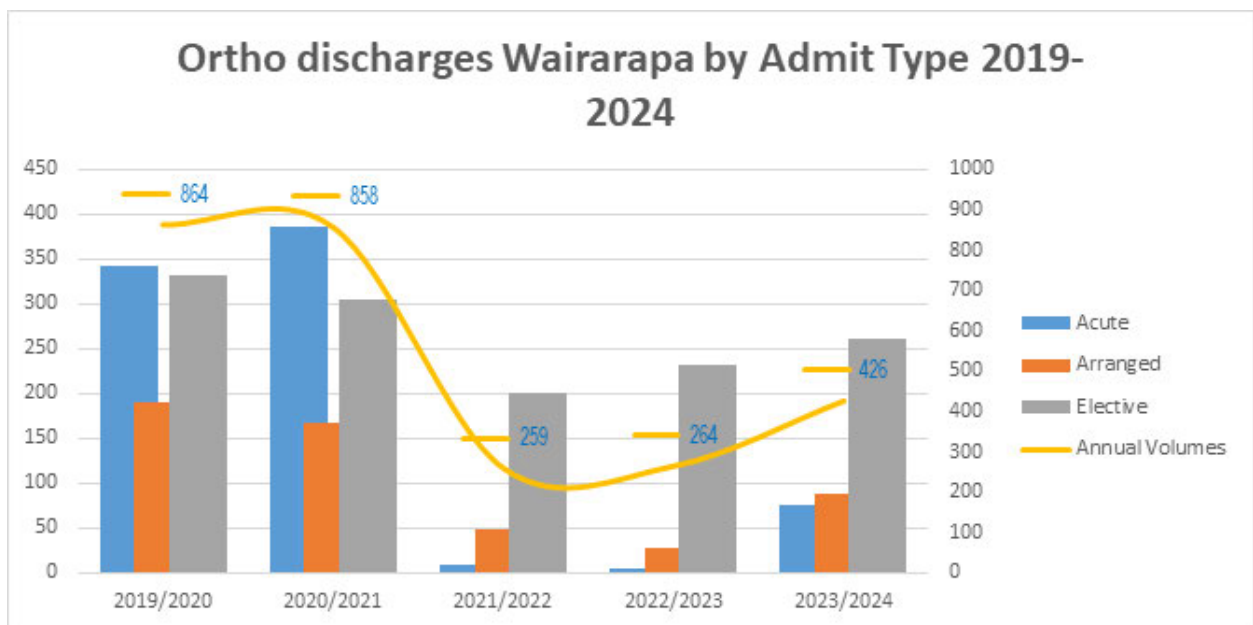
Waiting list

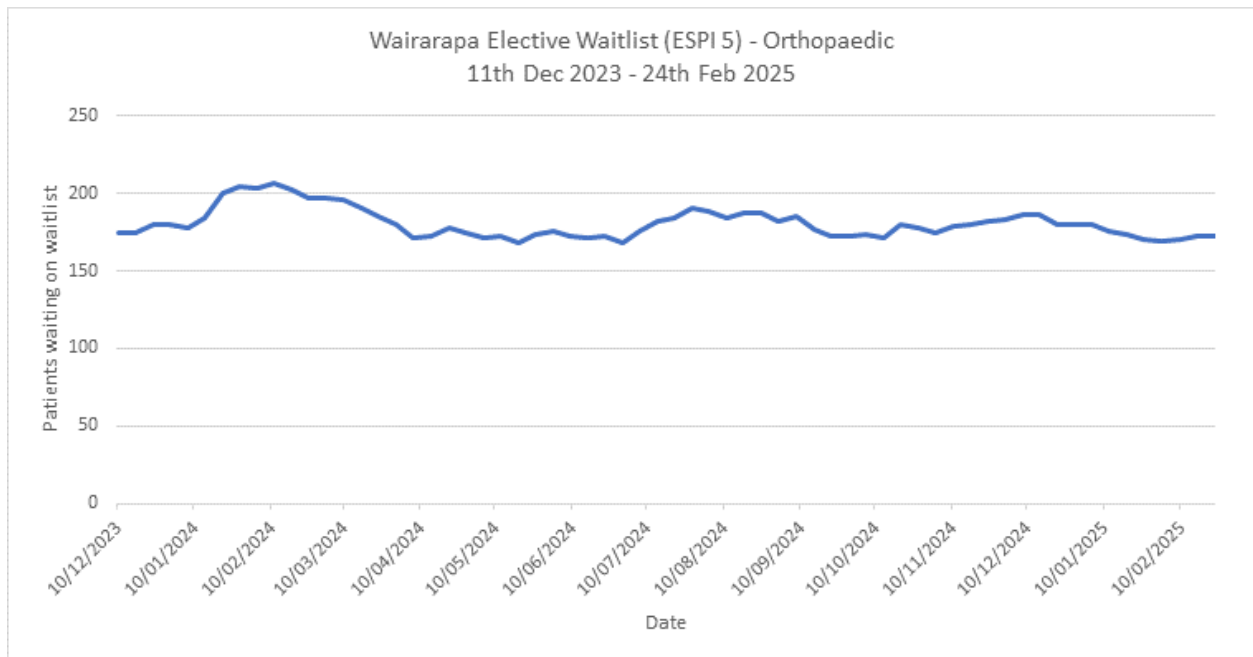
The current waitlist issues are a result of the gap between the exit of one surgeon and the start of another from late last year and are now starting to recover.

As at today, 26 February 2025, there are 55 patients who have been waiting over 365 days for an FSA, 9 of whom have booked dates.

As at 11 February 2025, Wairarapa had 186 people waiting for orthopaedic surgery, with 127 of those being over 120 days.

As at today, 26 February 2025, there are 60 patients waiting for surgery over 365 days, 8 of whom are booked.





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