

The case for investing in AWI delays in discharge

1. AWI delays are 4.9 times longer than a standard delay¹¹



2. Every AWI delay has a bigger impact on the system



Planned Care	Emergency Department	Ambulances
79 cancelled surgeries per average AWI delay ²	Hospital occupancy >92% increases ED wait times due to delayed admission ⁶	20% ambulance capacity is lost to delayed handovers ⁹
There are 81 cancelled surgeries a month ²	Every 1% increase in bed occupancy decreases the probability of meeting ED 4hr wait target by 9.5% ⁷	Delays in handover lead to ambulance stacking ^{9 10}
20% of all cancelled surgeries are due to capacity ²	For every 82 admitted patients delayed 8+hrs ED, there is 1 extra death ⁸	9% patients experience potential additional harm and 1% potential severe harm as a result of ambulance handover delays of more than 1hr ¹⁰
Patient anxiety increases during the wait for surgery ³	Waits 5+hrs increase 30 day mortality rates ⁸	
Longer waits increase demand for primary and secondary care ⁴	5-12hr delays cause predictable dose-response effect ⁸	
40% had their health worsen while waiting for planned care ⁵		

3. Long hospital stays are harmful to patients’ physical and mental health

Leading to deconditioning, hospital acquired infections and distress. Hospitals are not the least restrictive option

4. Addressing AWI delays is good for people and system pressures

This means reducing the number of people admitted to hospital, changing our legislative approach, and ensuring adequate social work and mental health officer capacity embedded within hospital discharge teams who actively manage and coordinate the processes required

- 1** Data provided by Glasgow HSCP hospital based social work team of AWI delays between October 2023 and January 2025 - includes cases where we have admission and discharge dates. Cases where we do not have discharge dates have been omitted from the analysis
- 2** Glasgow specific data from PHS on Cancelled Planned Operations, and Episodes and Spells data from July 2019 - September 2024 - available at <https://www.opendata.nhs.scot/dataset/479848ef-41f8-44c5-bfb5-666e0df8f574/resource/Of1cf6b1-ebf6-4928-b490-0a721cc98884> and <https://www.opendata.nhs.scot/dataset/d73b93ab-b09f-4d39-9cfb-0e5e34085803/resource/d59528c3-0a61-4fdd-8ed9-f6822838c78c>
- 3** BMC Public Health: Waiting for elective general surgery: impact on health related quality of life and psychosocial consequences – available at: [Waiting for elective general surgery: impact on health related quality of life and psychosocial consequences - PMC](#)
- 4** BMC Health Service Research: The cost of keeping patients waiting: retrospective treatment-control study of additional healthcare utilisation for UK patients awaiting elective treatment – available at: [The cost of keeping patients waiting: retrospective treatment-control study of additional healthcare utilisation for UK patients awaiting elective treatment | BMC Health Services Research | Full Text](#)
- 5** Care Quality Commission: Majority of patients remain positive about care they receive when in hospital but over a third say their health deteriorated while waiting for treatment – available at: [Majority of patients remain positive about care they receive when in hospital but over a third say their health deteriorated while waiting for treatment - Care Quality Commission](#)
- 6** The King's Fund: What's going on with A&E waiting times? – available at: [What's Going On With A&E Waiting Times? | The King's Fund](#)
- 7** [Spill Over Effects of Inpatient Bed Capacity on Accident and Emergency Performance in England - ScienceDirect](#)
- 8** Increased Mortality From A&E Waits Over 5 Hours
- available at <https://www.medscape.co.uk/viewarticle/increased-mortality-a-e-waits-over-5-hours-2022a10005ib>
- 9** Health Foundation: Why have ambulance waiting times been getting worse? Refers to UK wide data for July 2022 – available at: [Why have ambulance waiting times been getting worse? - The Health Foundation](#)
- 10** Nuffield Trust: Ambulance handover delays – available at: [Ambulance handover delays | Nuffield Trust](#)
- 11** [Glasgow City specific data from PHS census delays by council area and PHS delayed discharge bed days by council area from October 2023 - February 2025 - available at: Delayed Discharges in NHSScotland - Datasets - Scottish Health and Social Care Open Data](#)