

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

October 2012

Introduction

This briefing provides information on the performance of Local Health Boards (LHBs) against the Welsh Government targets for NHS treatment waiting times. Most NHS waiting times in Wales are measured against the time from referral to treatment (RTT), although there are a number of exceptions.¹ **The RTT is the period of time from referral, by a GP or other medical practitioner, to hospital for treatment.**²

The current Welsh Government targets for NHS RTT waiting times are to ensure that:

- **At least 95 per cent of patients waiting to start treatment must have waited less than 26 weeks from referral to treatment**
- **100 per cent of patients not treated within 26 weeks must be treated in 36 weeks.**

The Welsh Government measures progress against these targets each month, and the figures used are those for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of the month. Separate figures for patients treated during each month are published,³ but as these are not covered by the targets they have not been included in this release.

¹ The targets apply to the majority of referrals to NHS hospitals for treatment; however there are a number of exceptions. In addition, some conditions such as cancer have their own specific target, and are therefore not included in the general targets. Further information on referral to treatment targets is available at: Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times – April 2012](#), page 1, 14 June 2012 [accessed 15 October 2012]

² Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times – August 2012](#) 11 October 2012 [accessed 15 October 2012]

³ Stats Wales [035295] – Referral To Treatment Times – Treated patients [accessed 15 October 2012]

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in August 2012

Table 1 and figures 1 and 2 show performance against the 26 and 36 week referral to treatment waiting time targets for each LHB, and for the whole of Wales, using the latest figures from August 2012.⁴ It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- **In August 2012, neither the 26 nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.**
- **Powys LHB** achieved the 26 week referral to treatment waiting time target in August 2012.
- **Powys LHB** met the 36 week target in August 2012.
- **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for both targets.

Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of August 2012 (a), (c)

Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	70,307	93.5	74,884	99.6	75,171
Aneurin Bevan (d)	83,955	90.2	93,070	100.0	93,113
Betsi Cadwaladr	72,645	93.6	77,576	99.9	77,646
Cardiff and Vale	67,589	89.3	73,468	97.0	75,721
Cwm Taf	30,770	92.2	32,918	98.6	33,381
Hywel Dda	43,340	93.4	46,084	99.3	46,396
Powys	5,171	98.3	5,258	100.0	5,258
Wales	373,777	91.9	403,258	99.2	406,686

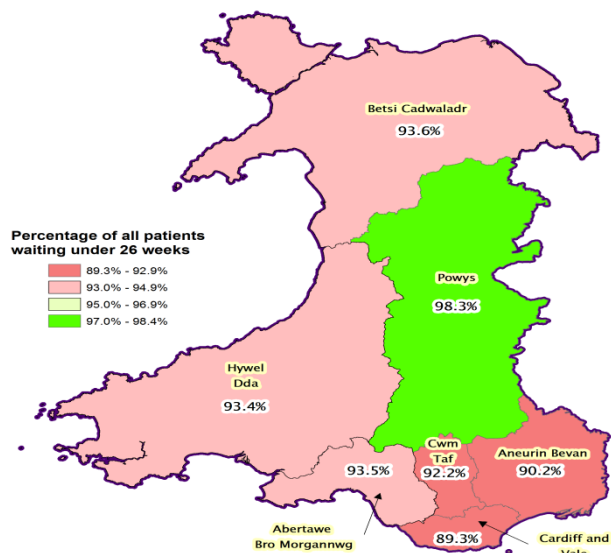
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

Notes:

- This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the [Welsh Government quality report](#) for further details.
- The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- Values in the purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time targets in August 2012.
- In Aneurin Bevan LHB 43 patients had been waiting to start treatment for more than 36 weeks at the end of August 2012. The figure in table 1 is shown as 100.0 due to rounding.

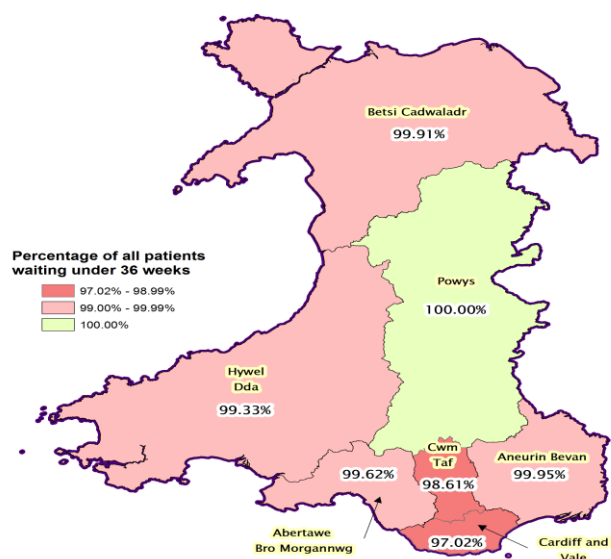
⁴ Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 15 October 2012]

Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment at end of August 2012



Source: Statswales © Crown copyright and database rights 2012. Ordnance Survey 100047295

Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of August 2012



Source: Statswales © Crown copyright and database rights 2012. Ordnance Survey 100047295

Performance against RTT waiting time targets since August 2011

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since August 2011.⁵

It can be seen from table 2 and figure 3 that:

- **Neither target has been met in any month** at an All Wales level between August 2011 and August 2012.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in August 2012 decreased by 1.2 percentage points from July 2012. It is at its lowest since December 2011..
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks was the same in August 2012 as in July 2012. It remains higher than, all months from August 2011 to February 2012.

Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets , on All Wales basis, August 2011 to August 2012 (a)

Date	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
August 2011	363,827	92.2	386,964	98.1	394,570
September 2011	359,166	91.5	385,033	98.1	392,467
October 2011	358,615	92.0	382,328	98.1	389,797
November 2011	356,019	92.0	379,348	98.0	386,977
December 2011	350,998	91.4	376,192	98.0	383,891
January 2012	346,716	92.3	369,176	98.3	375,719
February 2012	350,831	93.1	371,823	98.7	376,686
March 2012	366,989	94.0	388,614	99.6	390,228
April 2012	371,479	93.6	394,690	99.5	396,793
May 2012	371,996	93.4	396,192	99.4	398,469
June 2012	375,895	93.0	401,272	99.3	404,075
July 2012	375,265	93.1	400,082	99.2	403,185
August 2012	373,777	91.9	403,258	99.2	406,686

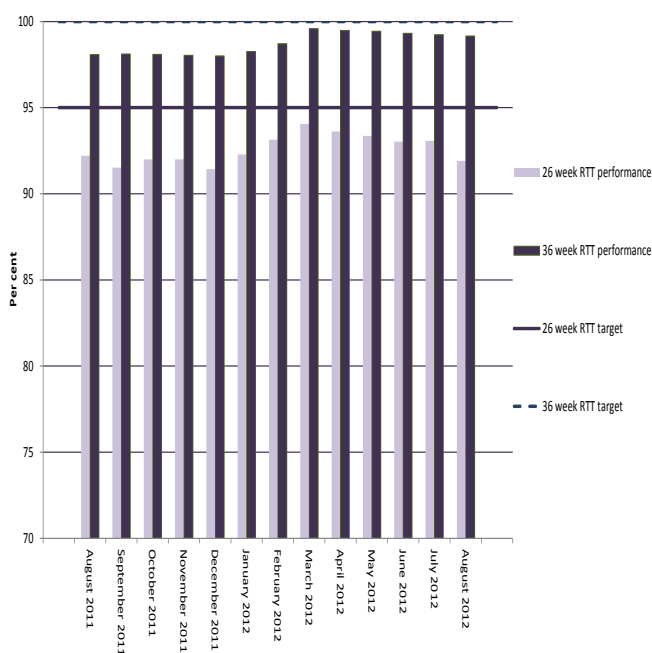
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [016964], [016965] and [035294]

Notes:

- This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the **Welsh Government quality report** for further details.
- The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.

⁵ Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, [010964] Cardiac Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment and [010965] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment [all accessed 15 October 2012]

Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from August 2011 to August 2012



Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [016964], [016965] and [035296]

Notes – See notes from Table 2.

Trauma and orthopaedic specialty

While **waiting time targets are applied to performance across all specialties**, it is useful to see the contribution of individual specialties towards performance.

In a written statement in March 2011, the then Minister for Health and Social Services highlighted the difficulty in achieving waiting time targets due to pressures within orthopaedic services resulting from increased GP referrals.⁶

In 2011-12, the Welsh Government invested £21.5 million in orthopaedic services. In its Draft Budget 2013-14 it states that this investment enabled the number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty decreased from almost 6,000 in June 2011 to 356 in

⁶ Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), *Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update*, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 15 October 2012]

March 2012.⁷ The Welsh Government allocated an additional £15 million in 2012-13 to deal with the increased demand for orthopaedic treatment.⁸ It has also stated that £16.6 million will be allocated in recurrent annual funding from 2013-14 with the purpose of sustaining improvements in orthopaedic waiting times.⁹

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of August 2012.¹⁰

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of August 2012, (a), (b)

Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (a)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	9,345	90.0	10,388	100.0	10,388
Aneurin Bevan	11,445	87.6	13,064	100.0	13,064
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,352	87.8	8,348	99.7	8,374
Cardiff and Vale	8,778	85.5	9,825	95.8	10,261
Cwm Taf	3,460	86.9	3,896	97.8	3,982
Hywel Dda	6,826	86.3	7,701	97.4	7,909
Powys	474	97.7	485	100.0	485
Wales	47,680	87.5	53,707	98.6	54,463

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

Notes:

- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in August 2012 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

- In **Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks.
- In **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg, Aneurin Bevan and Powys LHBS**, all patients had been waiting under 36 weeks for treatment.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under 26 and 36 weeks was **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**.

⁷ Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 15 October 2012]

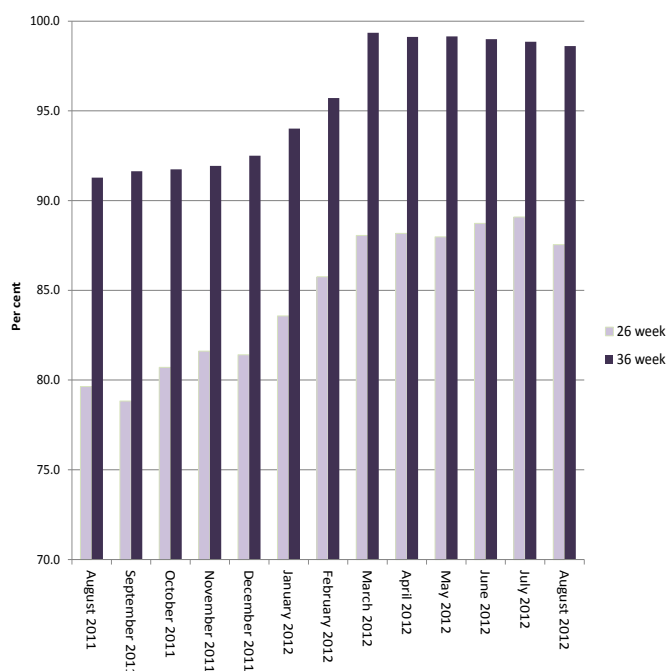
⁸ Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2012-13: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 24, October 2011 [accessed 15 October 2012]

⁹ Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 15 October 2012]

¹⁰ Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 15 October 2012]

Figure 4 compares the percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in the months from August 2011 to August 2012.¹¹

Figure 4: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, from August 2011 to August 2012



Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [016965] and [035296]

- For each month since August 2011, the percentage of patients waiting under 26 weeks has been **well below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties**.
- For each month since August 2011, the percentage of patients waiting under 36 weeks has also been **below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties**.

Further information

The links below provide further information about the data sources used in this briefing, and further information about NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times:

- Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times – August 2012](#)
- Stats Wales, [016964] Cardiac Referral to Treatment Times, Patients waiting to start treatment (October 2009 to August 2011)
- Stats Wales, [016965] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment (October 2009 to August 2011)
- Stats Wales, [035294] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment
- Stats Wales, [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month

Statistics on patients that have been treated during each month are available at:

- Stats Wales, [035295] Referral to Treatment Times – Treated patients

For further information and statistics on NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times, please contact Gareth Thomas (GarethDavid.Thomas@wales.gov.uk), Research Service.

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