

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

February 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.<sup>1</sup> **The RTT is the period of time from referral, by a GP or other medical practitioner, to hospital for treatment.**<sup>2</sup>

In 2011-12 the 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,<sup>3</sup> but as these are not covered by the targets they have not been

<sup>1</sup> 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, **NHS Referral to Treatment Times – December 2011**, page 1, 9 February 2012 [accessed 13 February 2012]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, **NHS Referral to Treatment Times – December 2011**, 9 February 2012 [accessed 13 February 2012]

<sup>3</sup> Stats Wales [035295] – Referral To Treatment Times – Treated patients [accessed 13 February 2012]

included in this release.

## NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in December 2011

Table 1 and figure 1 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 December 2011.<sup>4</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- **In December 2011, neither the 26 nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.**
- **Only Powys Teaching Health Board** achieved the 26 week referral to treatment waiting time target in December 2011.
- **Aneurin Bevan and Powys LHBs** met the 36 week target in December 2011.
- **Cwm Taf** was the worst performing LHB for both targets.

**Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of December 2011 (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	68,987	92.3	73,997	99.0	74,775
Aneurin Bevan (d)	75,374	94.5	79,737	100.0	79,737
Betsi Cadwaladr	65,746	91.6	70,157	97.8	71,753
Cardiff and Vale	66,717	88.6	72,633	96.5	75,272
Cwm Taf	29,310	84.3	32,202	92.6	34,786
Hywel Dda	40,070	93.8	42,605	99.8	42,706
Powys	4,794	98.6	4,861	100.0	4,862
<b>Wales</b>	<b>350,998</b>	<b>91.4</b>	<b>376,192</b>	<b>98.0</b>	<b>383,891</b>

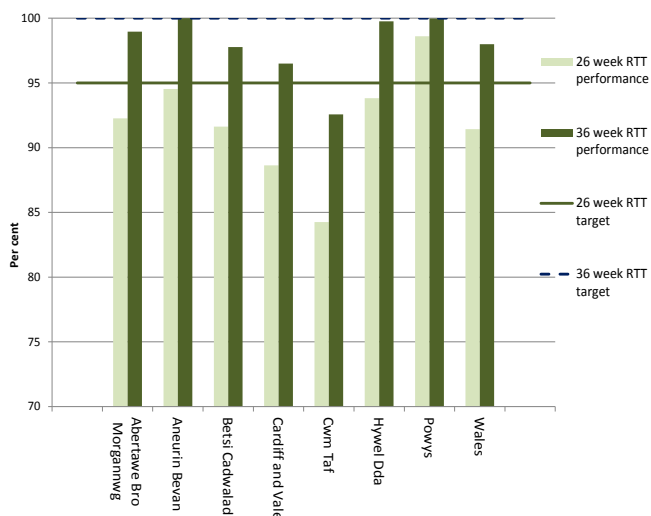
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

Notes:

- (a) 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.
- (b) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (c) Values in the green shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time targets in December 2011.
- (d) December 2011 figures for Aneurin Bevan are estimated using November 2011 data due to implementation of a new Patient Administration System at end of 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 13 February 2012]

**Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of December 2011**



Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

Notes – see notes (a), (b) and (d) from Table 1.

## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since April 2011

Table 2 and figure 2 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since April 2011.<sup>5,6</sup>

**Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, April 2011 to December 2011 (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	
April 2011	331,223	93.0	350,220	98.4	356,064
May 2011	350,344	92.4	372,548	98.2	379,292
June 2011	360,552	93.0	380,776	98.2	387,646
July 2011	365,413	93.2	385,202	98.2	392,271
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

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

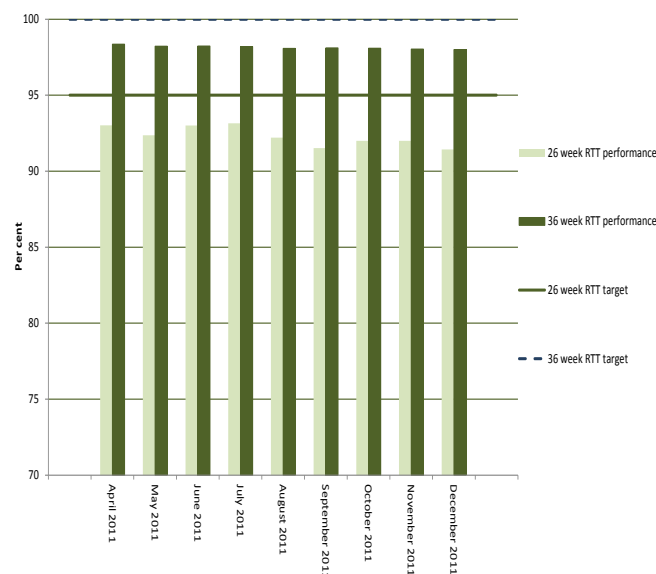
<sup>5</sup> Before April 2011 there were separate targets for general and cardiac referral to treatment waiting times. From April 2011 onwards performance against the waiting time targets has been measured combining both general and cardiac waiting times.

<sup>6</sup> 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 13 February 2012]

Notes:

- (a) 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.
- (b) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.

**Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from April 2011 to December 2011**



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

Notes – See notes from Table 2.

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

- **Neither target has been met in any month at an All Wales level between April 2011 and December 2011.**

## Performance in the 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.<sup>7</sup>

In March 2011 the then Welsh Government announced that **an additional £65 million would be invested into orthopaedic services over the next three years to help reduce waiting times.**<sup>8</sup>

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of December 2011.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of December 2011, (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	10,040	87.2	11,376	98.8	11,515
Aneurin Bevan (c)	10,704	88.6	12,075	100.0	12,075
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,540	74.1	8,639	84.9	10,170
Cardiff and Vale	8,948	74.1	10,159	84.1	12,074
Cwm Taf	3,759	73.3	4,412	86.0	5,131
Hywel Dda	6,337	87.5	7,149	98.7	7,240
Powys	353	96.4	366	100.0	366
<b>Wales</b>	<b>47,681</b>	<b>81.4</b>	<b>54,176</b>	<b>92.5</b>	<b>58,571</b>

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 green shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in December 2011 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.
- (c) December 2011 figures for Aneurin Bevan are estimated using November 2011 data due to implementation of a new Patient Administration System at end of 2011.

- In **Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks.
- In **Aneurin Bevan and Powys LHBs** all patients had been waiting under 36 weeks for treatment.
- In **Cardiff and Vale and Betsi Cadwaladr University LHBs**, fewer than 75 per cent of patients were waiting under 26 weeks, and less than 85 per cent of patients were waiting less than 36 weeks.

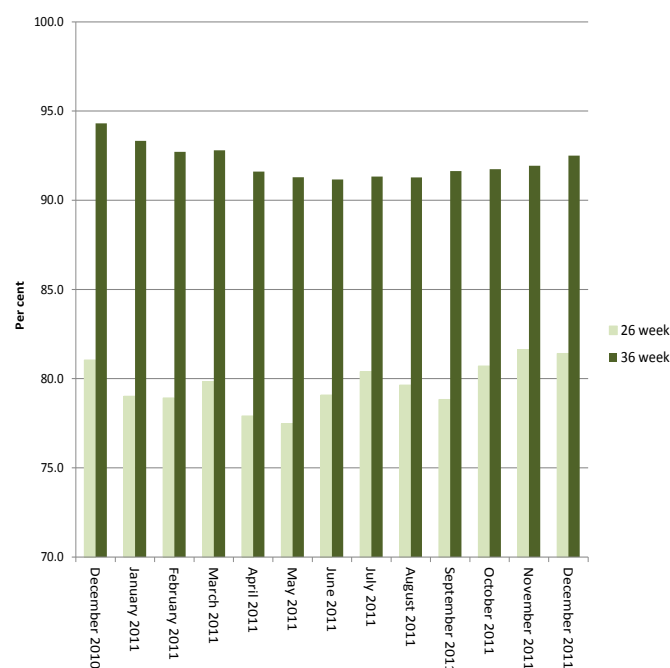
<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), *Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update*, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 13 February 2012]

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government, News release, *£65 million to cut waiting times for orthopaedic services across Wales*, 31 March 2011 [accessed 13 February 2012]

<sup>9</sup> Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 13 February 2012]

Figure 3 compares the percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in the months from December 2010 to December 2011.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, from December 2010 to December 2011**



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

- For each month since December 2010, the percentage of patients waiting under 26 weeks has been around 80 per cent, **well below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties.**

For each month since December 2010, the percentage of patients waiting under 36 weeks has also been **well below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties.**

<sup>10</sup> While the way that general RTT waiting time figures are calculated changed in April 2011, the way that figures for most specialties (including trauma and orthopaedic) are calculated has remained the same since October 2010, so it is possible to provide figures for a full calendar year. For further details see Welsh Government, *Technical changes to Referral to Treatment (RTT) Times with effect from October 2010*, page 3, October 2010 [accessed 13 February 2012]

## 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 – December 2011](#)
- 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](mailto:GarethDavid.Thomas@wales.gov.uk)), Research Service.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any comments or questions about our papers, or if you have any suggestions for possible future papers.

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