

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

May 2015

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.

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, [Waiting Times for NHS Services: Frequently Asked Questions](#), 9 June 2011 [accessed 14 May 2015]

² Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, March 2015](#), 14 May 2015 [accessed 14 May 2015]

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. The LHB figures included in this release are for patients treated by each LHB rather than the LHB they live in.

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in March 2015

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 March 2015.⁴ It can be seen from table 1 and figures 1 and 2 that:

- In March 2015, neither the 26 week nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.
- **Powys Teaching Health Board** achieved both the 26 week and the 36 week referral to treatment waiting time target in March 2015.
- **Hywel Dda Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for both the 26 week target and the 36 week target.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*



Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of March 2015 (a), (c),

Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	65,335	84.5	72,017	93.1	5,339	77,356
Aneurin Bevan	69,156	88.4	75,872	97.0	2,329	78,201
Betsi Cadwaladr	74,255	87.9	81,336	96.3	3,142	84,478
Cardiff and Vale	67,104	86.1	75,531	96.9	2,378	77,909
Cwm Taf	33,424	86.8	37,351	97.0	1,155	38,506
Hywel Dda	46,051	81.1	52,166	91.9	4,595	56,761
Powys	5,171	100.0	5,171	100.0	.	5,171
Wales	360,496	86.2	399,444	95.5	18,938	418,382

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting**,

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 **Referral to Treatment Time 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) The values in the purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time target in March 2015.

Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment at end of March 2015

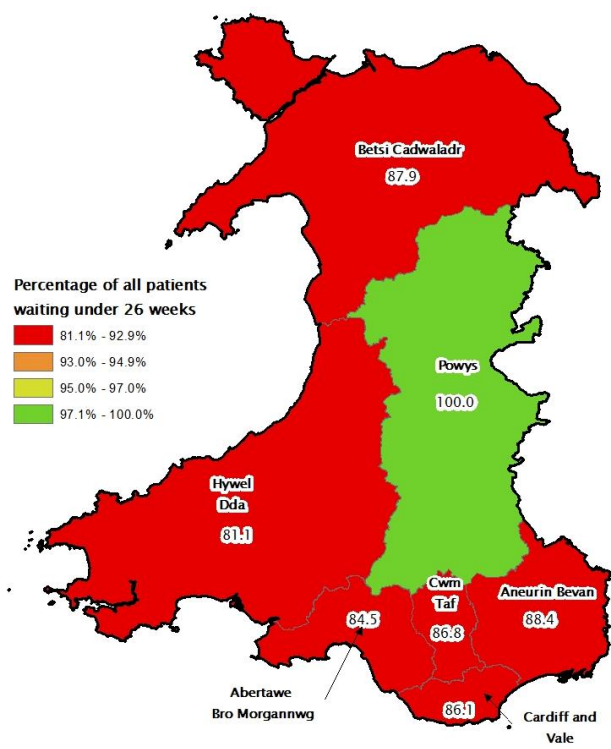
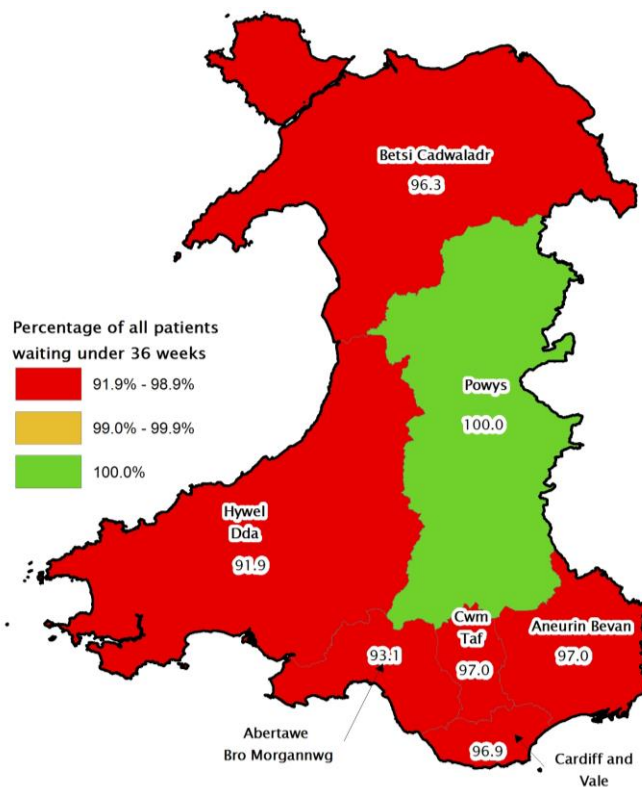


Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of March 2015



Source: Statswales

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Ordnance Survey 100047295.
Contains Ordnance Survey data.

Source: Statswales

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Performance against RTT waiting time targets since March 2014

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since March 2014.⁵

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 March 2014 and March 2015.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in March 2015 was 0.9 percentage points higher than in February, the joint sixth lowest since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in March 2015 was 1.1 percentage points higher than in February, the seventh lowest since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.
- The number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was over 8,000 more than in March 2014, although it was down by over 4,000 compared to February. It was the seventh highest since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.
- The number of people waiting for treatment at the end of March 2015 was almost the same as in March 2014. However, this is 20,000 lower than the peak in August 2014.⁶

Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, March 2014 to March 2015 (a), (b)

Date	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
March 2014	371,877	88.9	407,856	97.5	10,586	418,442
April 2014	371,744	87.7	411,214	97.0	12,795	424,009
May 2014	371,205	86.3	414,864	96.4	15,498	430,362
June 2014	379,870	87.3	418,716	96.2	16,400	435,116
July 2014	378,301	87.2	416,090	95.9	17,649	433,739
August 2014	377,013	86.0	418,440	95.4	20,151	438,591
September 2014	371,137	85.7	414,059	95.7	18,810	432,869
October 2014	371,960	86.2	411,718	95.4	19,785	431,503
November 2014	365,859	86.3	404,032	95.4	19,679	423,711
December 2014	357,848	85.1	399,259	95.0	21,226	420,485
January 2015	349,674	84.3	391,101	94.3	23,521	414,622
February 2015	354,687	85.3	392,499	94.4	23,238	415,737
March 2015	360,496	86.2	399,444	95.5	18,938	418,382

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#)

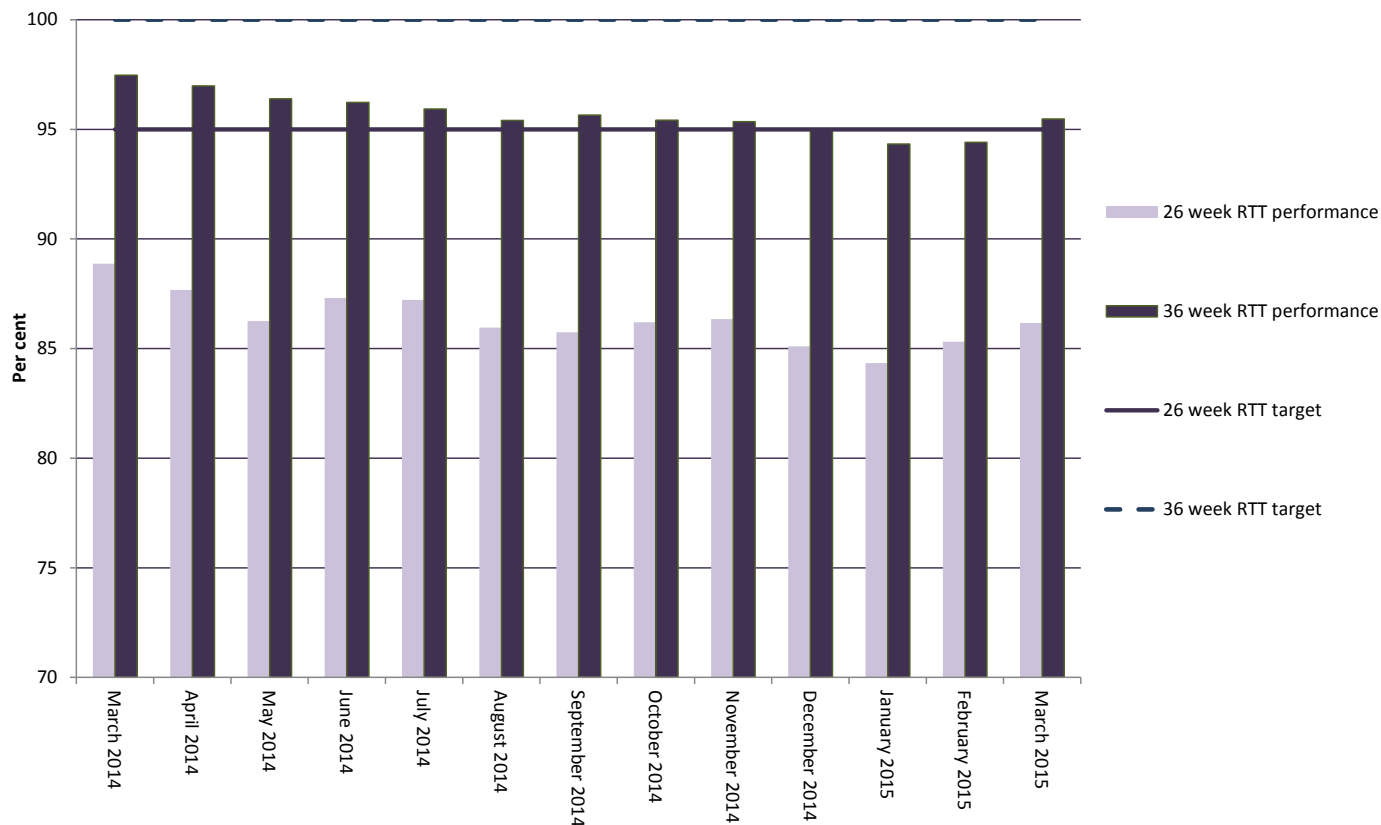
Notes:

- (a) This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the [Referral to treatment time 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.

⁵ Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 14 May 2015]

⁶ Ibid

Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from March 2014 to March 2015



Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks**

Notes – See notes from Table 2

Trauma and orthopaedic specialty

While **waiting time targets are allied 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.⁷

⁷ Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), **Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update**, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 14 May 2015]

Following additional funding allocations for orthopaedic treatment in 2011-12 and 2012-13, the Welsh Government 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.⁸

⁸ Welsh Government, **Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs**, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 14 May 2015]



Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of March 2015.

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of March 2015, (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	6,889	67.0	8,368	81.3	10,288
Aneurin Bevan	10,842	76.9	12,642	89.7	14,101
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,685	69.7	10,881	87.4	12,455
Cardiff and Vale	8,753	84.3	10,129	97.6	10,379
Cwm Taf	4,223	83.9	4,892	97.1	5,036
Hywel Dda	5,101	66.2	6,362	82.5	7,707
Powys	421	100.0	421	100.0	421
Wales	44,914	74.4	53,695	88.9	60,387

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting**

Notes:

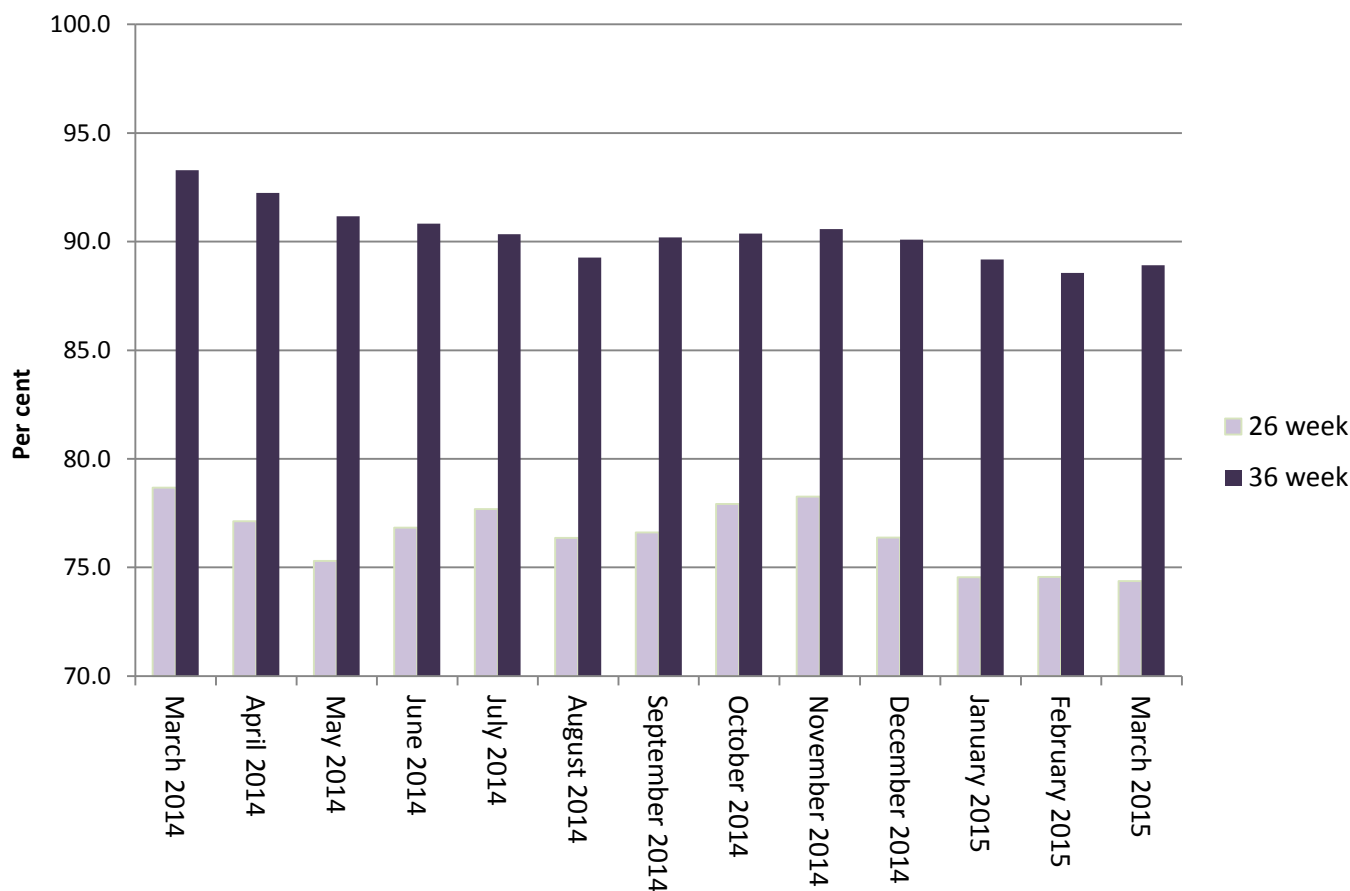
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in March 2015 equal to or above that needed to achieve the waiting time targets.

In March 2015, it can be seen that:

- **In Powys Teaching Health Board** all patients had been waiting less than 26 weeks. In all other LHBs, less than 85 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment.
- **In Powys Teaching Health Board**, all patients had been waiting under 36 weeks for treatment. In all other LHBs, less than 98 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under 26 weeks was **Hywel Dda Health Board**. **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board** had the lowest percentage of patients waiting under 36 weeks.

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 March 2014 to March 2015.

Figure 4: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, from March 2014 to March 2015



Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#)

- For each month since March 2014, the percentage of patients waiting under 26 weeks has been **well below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties**. The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in March 2015 decreased by 0.2 percentage points compared to February. This was the lowest of any point over the past year, and since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.⁹
- For each month since March 2014, the percentage of patients waiting under 36 weeks has also been **below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties**. The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in March 2015 was the second lowest of any point over the past year, and since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011. It increased by 0.3 percentage points compared to February.

⁹ Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 14 May 2015]



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, March 2015**
- Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks**
- Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting**
- Statistics on patients that have been treated during each month are available at:
 - Stats Wales, **Treated patients by month and grouped weeks**
 - Wales Audit Office, **NHS Waiting Times for Elective Care in Wales**, January 2015

For further information and statistics on NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times, please contact **Nigel Barwise** (Nigel.Barwise@Assembly.Wales), **Research Service**.

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Enquiry no: 15/1209