

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

August 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

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,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 18 June 2012]

² Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times – June 2012](#), 9 August 2012 [accessed 10 August 2012]

³ Stats Wales [\[035295\]](#) – Referral To Treatment Times – Treated patients [accessed 10 August 2012]

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in June 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 June 2012.⁴ It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- **In June 2012, neither the 26 nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.**
- **Betsi Cadwaladr and Powys LHBs** achieved the 26 week referral to treatment waiting time target in June 2012.
- **Aneurin Bevan and Powys LHBs** met the 36 week target in June 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 June 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	70,318	94.7	73,937	99.6	74,233
Aneurin Bevan	86,820	91.6	94,772	100.0	94,772
Betsi Cadwaladr	72,819	95.0	76,603	99.9	76,644
Cardiff and Vale	66,749	90.1	72,142	97.4	74,098
Cwm Taf	30,777	93.7	32,406	98.6	32,857
Hywel Dda	43,029	93.5	45,967	99.9	46,026
Powys	5,383	98.9	5,445	100.0	5,445
Wales	375,895	93.0	401,272	99.3	404,075

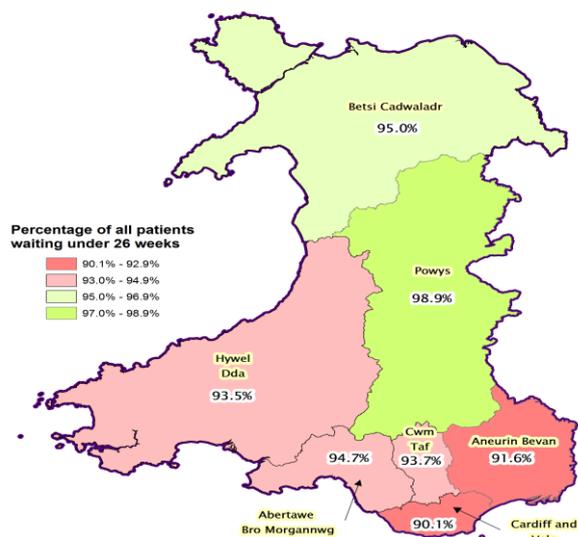
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [\[035296\]](#)

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 purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time targets in June 2012.

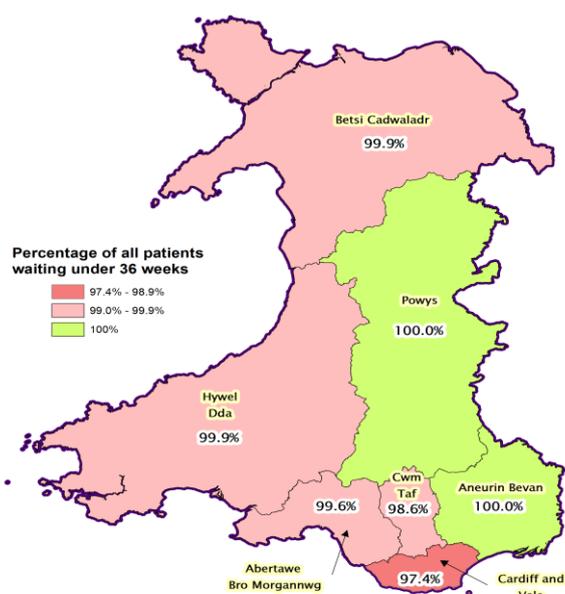
⁴ Stats Wales [\[035296\]](#) Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 12 July 2012]

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



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

Performance against RTT waiting time targets since June 2011

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since June 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 June 2011 and June 2012.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks has decreased over the last four months. However it remains higher than, or equal to, all months from June 2011 to January 2012.

Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, June 2011 to June 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	
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
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

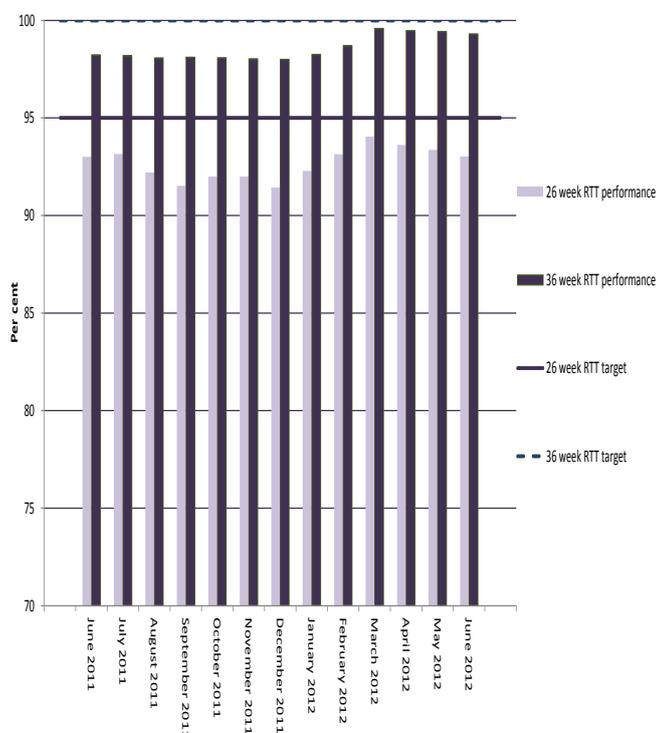
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [016964], [016965] and [035294]

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 10 August 2012]

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

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

The Welsh Government allocated an additional £15 million in 2012-13 and £16 million in 2013-14 to increase capacity to deal with the increased demand for orthopaedic treatment.⁷

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of June 2012.⁸

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of June 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	9,449	90.0	10,499	100.0	10,500
Aneurin Bevan	11,517	89.3	12,899	100.0	12,899
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,803	90.4	8,610	99.8	8,628
Cardiff and Vale	8,895	85.6	9,988	96.2	10,386
Cwm Taf	3,620	88.7	3,994	97.8	4,083
Hywel Dda	6,551	87.9	7,415	99.5	7,456
Powys	407	97.8	416	100.0	416
Wales	48,242	88.7	53,821	99.0	54,368

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 March 2012 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

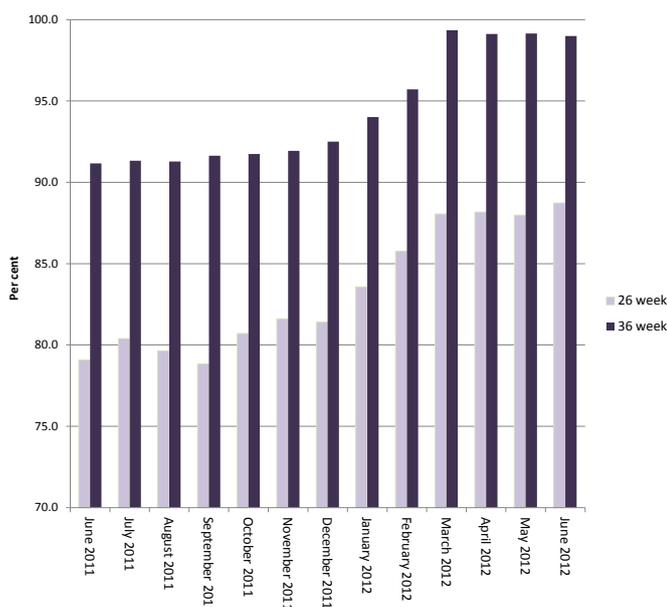
- In **Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks.
- In **Aneurin Bevan and Powys LHBs**, all patients had been waiting under 36 weeks for treatment. In **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board** all but one patient had been waiting under 36 weeks 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 2012-13: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 24, October 2011 [accessed 10 August 2012]

⁸ Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 10 August 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 June 2011 to June 2012.⁹

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



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

- For each month since June 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**, although the figures for June 2012 is higher than those for all previous months since June 2011.
- For each month since June 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 – June 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.

View our **full range of publications** on the Assembly website: assemblywales.org/research

You can also follow us on Twitter: [@NAWRResearch](https://twitter.com/NAWRResearch)

We welcome your comments. These should be sent to: **Research Service, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff, CF99 1NA** or e-mailed to Research.Service@wales.gov.uk

The Research Service has produced this Research Note for the benefit of Assembly Members and their support staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

Enquiry no: 12/2197