

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

May 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 – March 2012](#), page 1, 10 May 2012 [accessed 14 May 2012]

² Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times – March 2012](#), 10 May 2012 [accessed 14 May 2012]

³ Stats Wales [035295] – Referral To Treatment Times – Treated patients [accessed 12 April 2012]

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in March 2012

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 March 2012.⁴ It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- **In March 2012, neither the 26 nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.**
- **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg, Betsi Cadwaladr, Hywel Dda and Powys LHBs** achieved the 26 week referral to treatment waiting time target in March 2012.
- **Aneurin Bevan, Betsi Cadwaladr, Hywel Dda and Powys LHBs** met the 36 week target in March 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 March 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	68,930	95.1	72,273	99.7	72,509
Aneurin Bevan	85,395	93.1	91,762	100.0	91,762
Betsi Cadwaladr	67,569	95.6	70,696	100.0	70,696
Cardiff and Vale	66,799	91.5	71,798	98.3	73,031
Cwm Taf	30,672	94.4	32,348	99.6	32,493
Hywel Dda	42,177	95.4	44,217	100.0	44,217
Powys	5,447	98.7	5,520	100.0	5,520
Wales	366,989	94.0	388,614	99.6	390,228

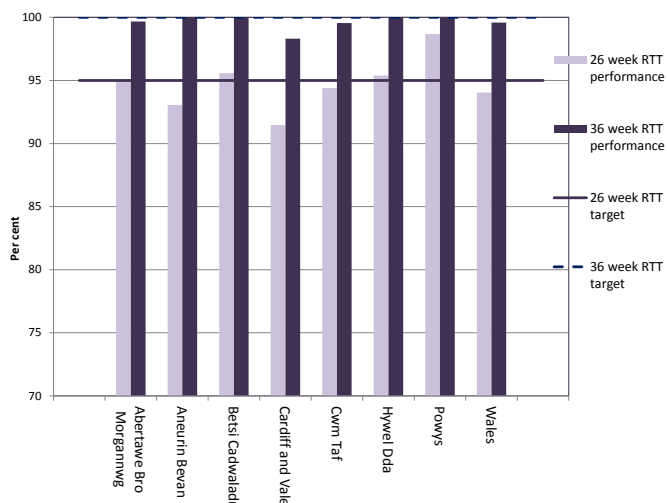
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

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 March 2012.

⁴ Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 14 May 2012]

Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of March 2012



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.^{5,6}

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 March 2012.
- **The percentage of patients waiting under 26 and 36 weeks for treatment at the end of March 2012 were the highest in all months since April 2011.**

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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 14 May 2012]

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

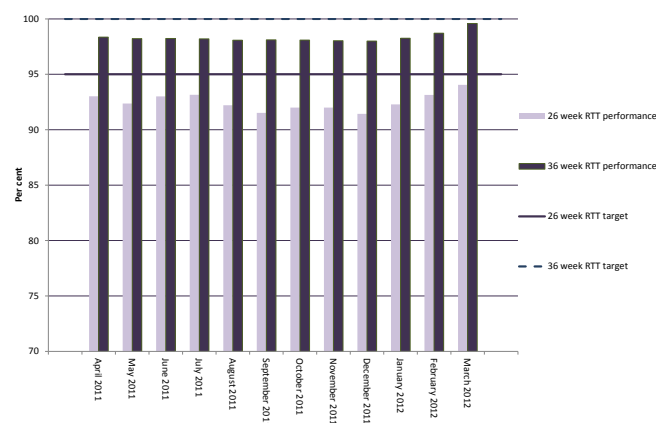
Date	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
April 2011	331,223	93.0	350,220	98.4	356,064
May 2011	350,344	92.4	372,548	98.2	379,292
June 2011	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
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

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.

Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from April 2011 to March 2012



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

Notes – See notes from Table 2.

Trauma and orthopaedic speciality

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.⁷

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.**⁸

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic speciality, at the end of March 2012.⁹

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic speciality at end of March 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	9,618	90.4	10,640	100.0	10,640
Aneurin Bevan	11,410	87.1	13,094	100.0	13,094
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,862	87.2	9,021	100.0	9,021
Cardiff and Vale	9,126	85.9	10,265	96.6	10,621
Cwm Taf	3,673	87.9	4,180	100.0	4,180
Hywel Dda	6,520	90.2	7,230	100.0	7,230
Powys	355	97.3	365	100.0	365
Wales	48,564	88.1	54,795	99.4	55,151

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

Notes:

- 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 indicate a level of performance in March 2012 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

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 2012]

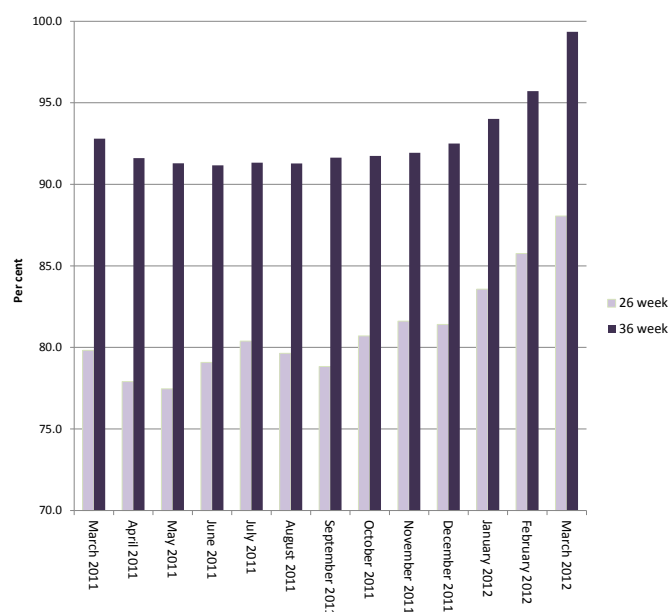
⁸ Welsh Government, News release, *£65 million to cut waiting times for orthopaedic services across Wales*, 31 March 2011 [accessed 14 May 2012]

⁹ Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 14 May 2012]

- In **Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks.
- In **all LHBs except Cardiff and Vale**, 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**.

Figure 3 compares the percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic speciality in the months from March 2011 to March 2012.¹⁰

Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic speciality, from March 2011 to March 2012



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

¹⁰ 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 14 May 2012]

- For each month since March 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 March 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**.

The percentage of patients waiting under 26 and 36 weeks for treatment at the end of March 2012 were the highest at any stage of the last calendar year.

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 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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