

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

February 2014

## 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>

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.**

<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, [Referral to Treatment Times – April 2012](#), page 4, 14 June 2012 [accessed 13 February 2014]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, December 2013](#), 13 February 2014 [accessed 13 February 2014]

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 included in this release. The LHB figures included in this release are for patients treated by each LHB rather than by LHB of residence, which are also published on Stats Wales.<sup>4</sup>

## NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in December 2013

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 December 2013.<sup>5</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- In **December 2013**, neither the 26 nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.
- **Powys Teaching Health Board** achieved the 26 week and 36 week referral to treatment waiting time targets in December 2013.
- **Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for both the 26 week target and the 36 week target.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#) [accessed 13 February 2014]

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, December 2013](#), 13 February 2014 [accessed 13 February 2014]

Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of December 2013 (a), (c),

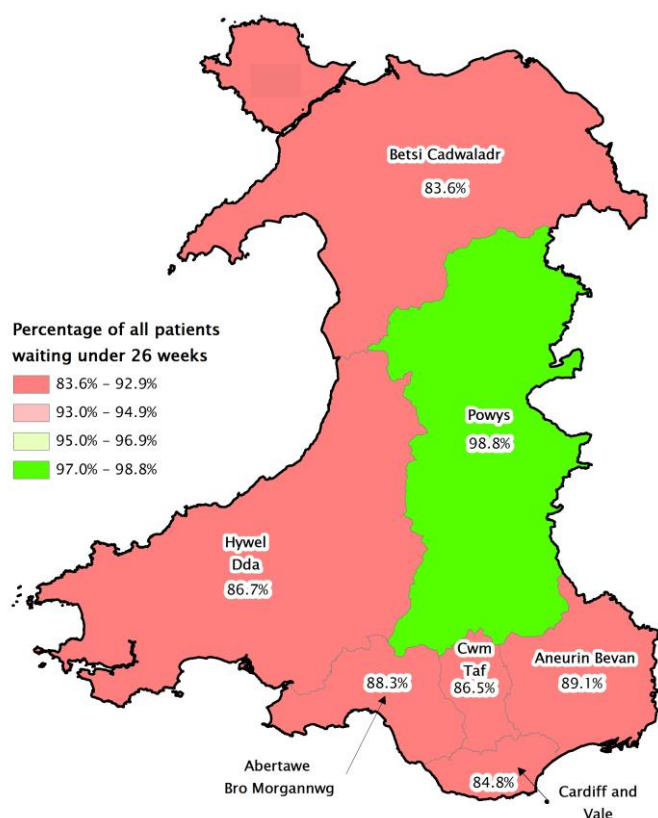
Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	68,740	88.3	75,927	97.5	1,914	77,841
Aneurin Bevan	70,796	89.1	78,015	98.1	1,474	79,489
Betsi Cadwaladr	71,001	83.6	80,177	94.4	4,716	84,893
Cardiff and Vale	65,780	84.8	74,579	96.1	2,995	77,574
Cwm Taf	32,044	86.5	35,597	96.1	1,458	37,055
Hywel Dda	46,162	86.7	51,036	95.9	2,188	53,224
Powys	5,375	98.8	5,442	100.0	.	5,442
<b>Wales</b>	<b>359,898</b>	<b>86.6</b>	<b>400,773</b>	<b>96.5</b>	<b>14,745</b>	<b>415,518</b>

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 **NHS Wales 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) Values in the purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time targets in December 2013

Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment at end of December 2013

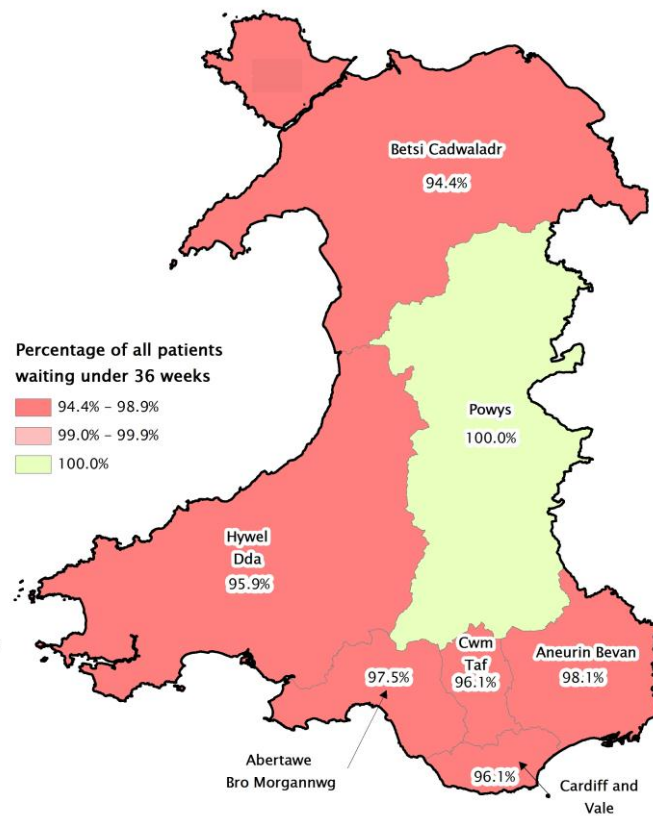


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Source: Statswales

Contains Ordnance Survey data.

Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of December 2013



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Source: Statswales

Contains Ordnance Survey data.

## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since December 2012

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since December 2012.<sup>6</sup>

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 December 2012 and December 2013.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in December 2013 was 1.4 percentage points lower than in November 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in December 2013 was 0.3 percentage points lower than in November 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.
- The number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was the highest of any month over the past year.
- The total number of patients waiting for treatment was the fifth highest of any month over the past year. Over 26,000 more people were waiting for treatment at the end of December 2013 compared to December 2012.

**Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, December 2012 to December 2013 (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	
December 2012	352,397	90.6	383,593	98.6	5,426	389,019
January 2013	347,156	90.7	375,840	98.2	6,850	382,690
February 2013	352,892	91.5	379,131	98.3	6,390	385,521
March 2013	356,678	91.5	384,457	98.6	5,414	389,871
April 2013	357,493	90.3	388,481	98.1	7,611	396,092
May 2013	362,209	89.3	396,802	97.8	8,933	405,735
June 2013	368,365	89.8	399,938	97.5	10,123	410,061
July 2013	375,192	90.1	405,389	97.3	11,109	416,498
August 2013	370,964	88.6	405,375	96.9	13,147	418,522
September 2013	368,569	88.4	405,265	97.2	11,672	416,937
October 2013	366,875	88.2	403,742	97.0	12,281	416,023
November 2013	364,999	88.0	401,502	96.8	13,269	414,771
December 2013	359,898	86.6	400,773	96.5	14,745	415,518

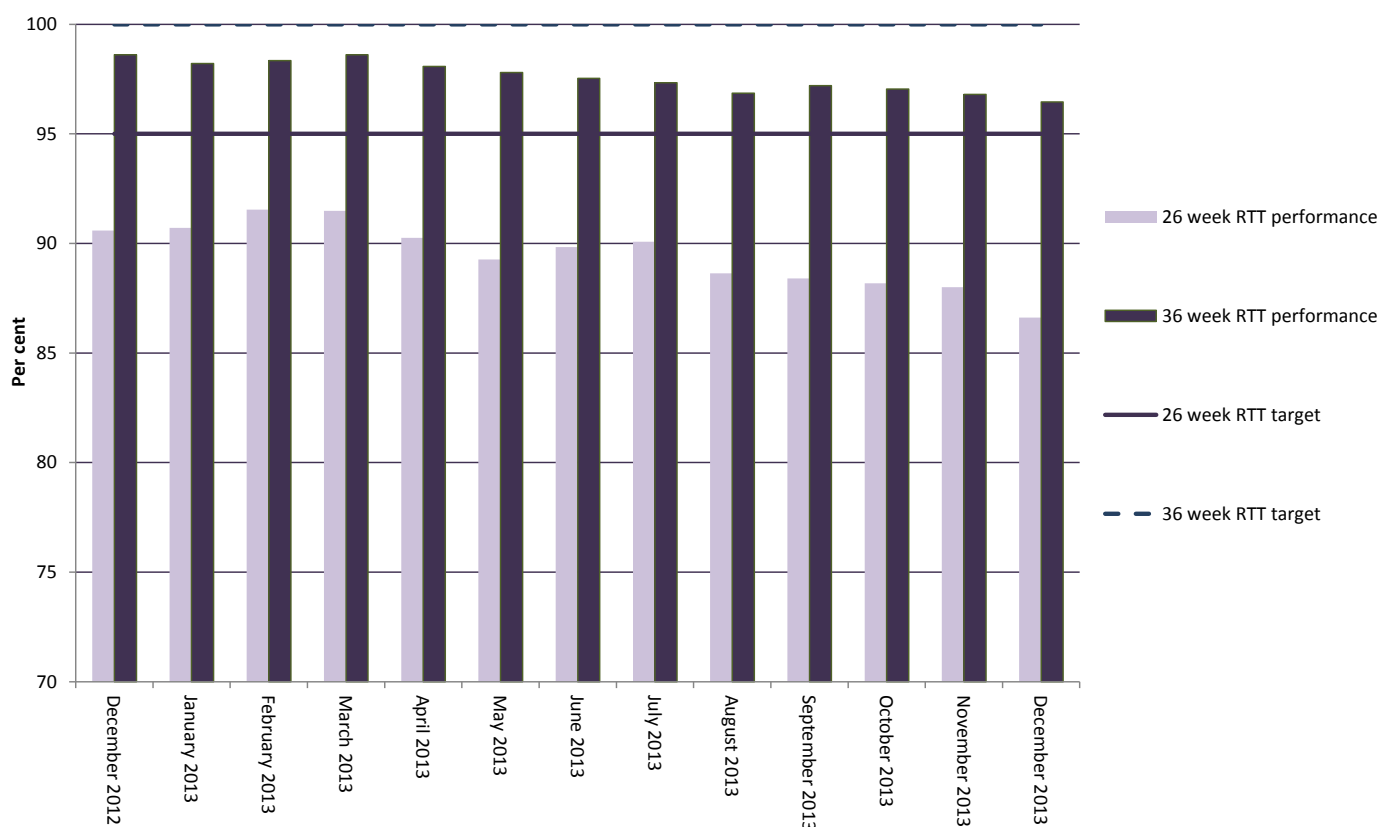
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#)

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 [NHS Wales 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.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 9 January 2014]

Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from December 2012 to December 2013



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 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

<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 2014]

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government, [Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs](#), page 38, October 2012 [accessed 13 February 2014]

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of December 2013.

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of December 2013, (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	8,053	78.7	9,644	94.2	10,239
Aneurin Bevan	10,478	87.2	11,835	98.5	12,015
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,539	75.4	10,475	92.5	11,325
Cardiff and Vale	7,666	86.3	8,686	97.8	8,882
Cwm Taf	3,451	75.9	4,190	92.1	4,549
Hywel Dda	6,399	72.1	7,823	88.1	8,877
Powys	498	96.3	517	100.0	517
<b>Wales</b>	<b>45,084</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>53,170</b>	<b>94.3</b>	<b>56,404</b>

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

Notes:

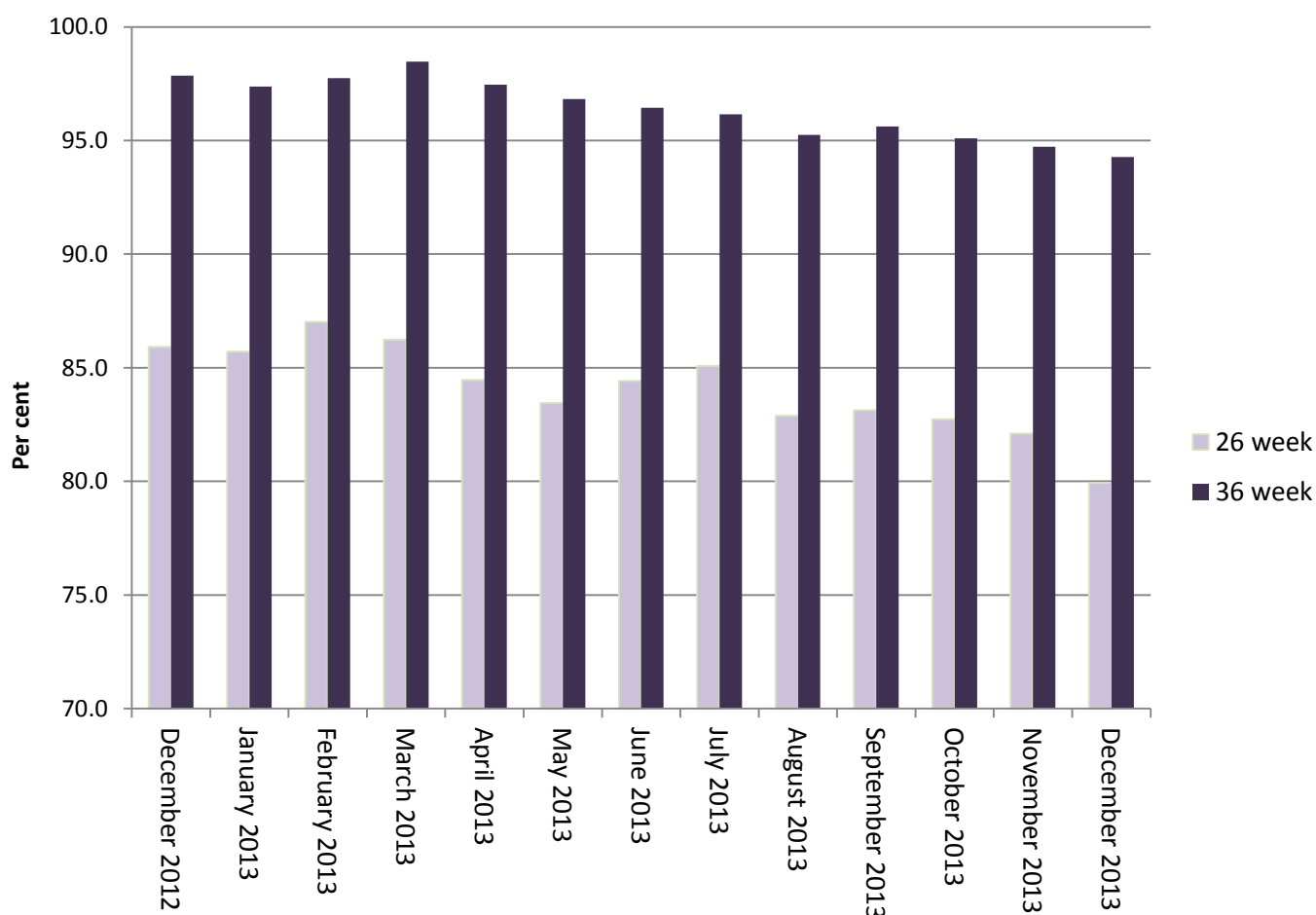
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in December 2013 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

In December 2013, it can be seen that:

- **In Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks. In all other LHBs, less than 88 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 99 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under both 26 weeks and 36 weeks was **Hywel Dda Health Board**.

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 December 2012 to December 2013.

**Figure 4: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, from December 2012 to December 2013**



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

- For each month since December 2012, 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 December 2013 was 2.2 percentage points lower than November 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.
- For each month since December 2012, 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 December 2013 was the lowest of any point over the past year, and decreased by 0.4 percentage points compared to November 2013.

## 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 2013**
- 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**

For further information and statistics on NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times, please contact **Nigel Barwise** ([Nigel.Barwise@wales.gov.uk](mailto:Nigel.Barwise@wales.gov.uk)), **Research Service**.

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