

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

September 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 14 September 2012]

² Welsh Government, **Referral to Treatment Times – July 2012, 13 September 2012** [accessed 14 September 2012]

³ Stats Wales [035295] – Referral To Treatment Times – Treated patients [accessed 14 September 2012]

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

- **In July 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 July 2012.
- **Powys LHB** met the 36 week target in July 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 July 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	70,125	94.5	73,891	99.6	74,193
Aneurin Bevan (d)	86,429	91.4	94,548	100.0	94,556
Betsi Cadwaladr	72,959	95.0	76,738	99.9	76,827
Cardiff and Vale	67,035	90.3	72,109	97.2	74,205
Cwm Taf	31,199	93.8	32,813	98.7	33,255
Hywel Dda	42,192	94.3	44,597	99.6	44,763
Powys	5,326	98.9	5,386	100.0	5,386
Wales	375,265	93.1	400,082	99.2	403,185

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

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.
- Values in the purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time targets in July 2012.
- In Aneurin Bevan LHB 8 patients had been waiting to start treatment for more than 36 weeks at the end of July 2012. The figure in table 1 is shown as 100.0 due to rounding.

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

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

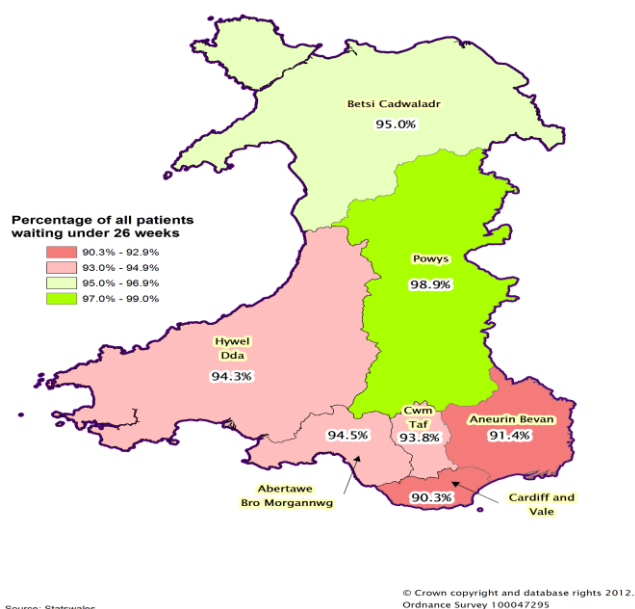
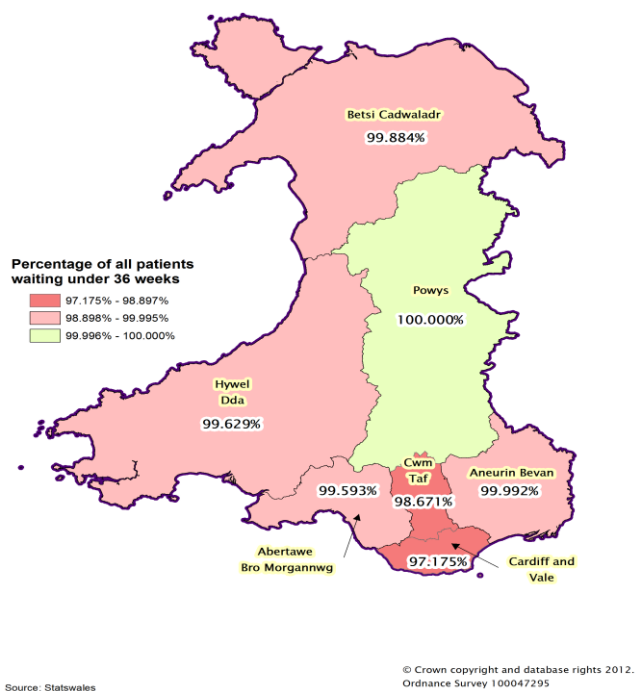


Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of July 2012



Performance against RTT waiting time targets since July 2011

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

Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, July 2011 to July 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	
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
July 2012	375,265	93.1	400,082	99.2	403,185

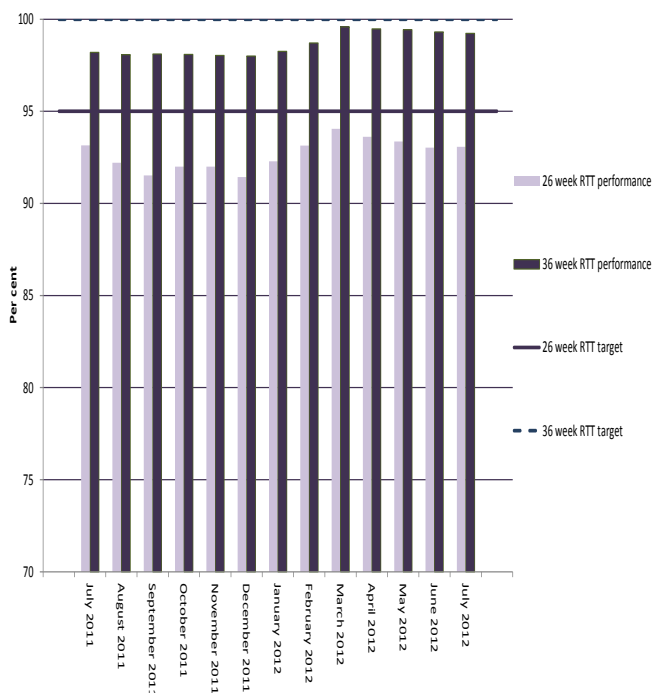
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [016964], [016965] and [035294]

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 14 September 2012]

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

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

⁶ Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), *Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update*, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 14 September 2012]

⁷ Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2012-13: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 24, October 2011 [accessed 14 September 2012]

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

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of July 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	9,268	90.4	10,245	100.0	10,247
Aneurin Bevan	11,528	88.6	13,008	100.0	13,008
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,740	90.7	8,507	99.7	8,536
Cardiff and Vale	8,653	86.5	9,584	95.8	9,999
Cwm Taf	3,658	89.7	4,006	98.3	4,077
Hywel Dda	6,772	88.7	7,536	98.7	7,638
Powys	431	99.1	435	100.0	435
Wales	48,050	89.1	53,321	98.9	53,940

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales [035296]

Notes:

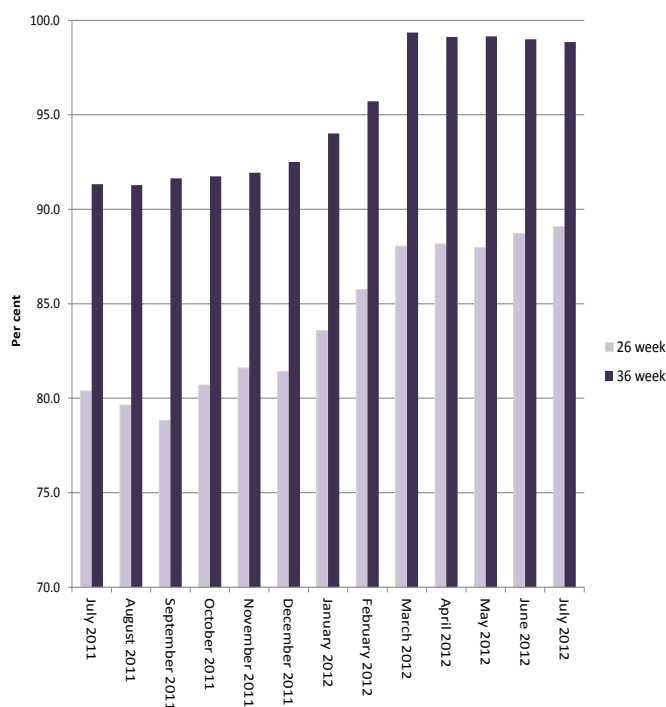
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in July 2012 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

- 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 two 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 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 July 2011 to July 2012.⁹

⁸ Stats Wales [035296] Referral to Treatment Times – Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month [accessed 14 September 2012]

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



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

- For each month since July 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 July 2012 is higher than those for all previous months since July 2011.
- For each month since July 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 – July 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: 12/2400