

## National Assembly for Wales

### NHS Referral to Treatment Times October 2011

This is the first in a series of quarterly research papers providing a statistical overview of the progress of the NHS in Wales and Local Health Boards (LHBs) against the Welsh Government target for Referral to Treatment (RTT) times. This paper expands on the Welsh Government's monthly statistical release, and examines the performance of LHBs and the NHS in Wales against the RTT target by specialty, and also focuses on the trauma and orthopaedic specialty.

The paper also looks at performance against targets since October 2010, when a number of changes to how RTT is measured took place.

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**Enquiry no:** 11/1016

## **National Assembly for Wales**

NHS Referral to Treatment Times  
October 2011

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Paper number: 11/059



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# NHS Referral to Treatment Times

## 1. Introduction

This is the first in a series of quarterly research papers providing a statistical overview of the progress of the NHS in Wales and Local Health Boards (LHBs) against the Welsh Government target for Referral to Treatment (RTT) times. RTT is the period of time from referral by a GP or other medical practitioner to hospital for treatment in the NHS in Wales.<sup>1</sup> A RTT pathway includes time spent waiting for any hospital appointments, tests, scans or other procedures required before treatment commences.

In 2011-12 the Welsh Government target for RTT times is to ensure timely access to planned services so that **at least 95 per cent of patients waiting to start treatment must have waited less than 26 weeks from the date the referral letter was received in the hospital.**<sup>2</sup>

The Welsh Government measures progress against this target each month, and the figures used to measure progress are **those for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of the month.** Therefore, while the Welsh Government also publishes statistics in relation to patients treated during each month, this publication concentrates on those waiting to start treatment at the end of the month.

The general RTT target applies to the majority of referrals to NHS hospitals for treatment; however there are a number of exceptions including referrals for palliative care, mental health hospital services and inpatient/day-case dentistry.<sup>3</sup> In addition some treatments such as cancer have their own specific targets, and are therefore not included in the general RTT target. While cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT, the monthly Welsh Government statistical release on RTT includes cardiac RTT figures in its general RTT figures, and therefore so does this publication.<sup>4</sup> More detailed analysis of figures for patients waiting for cardiac treatment is available in the Research Service publication *Cardiac Disease in Wales*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – July 2011](#), 8 September 2011 [accessed 8 September 2011]

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Research Service, [Cardiac Disease in Wales, October 2011](#)

## 2. Referral to Treatment times in July 2011

The latest Welsh Government figures for general RTT times are for July 2011. Table 1 shows the position against the 26 week RTT target for each LHB and at an all-Wales level for July 2011 for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of the month. Figures for the number and percentage of patients who have been waiting to start treatment for less than 36 weeks are also included.

**Table 1: Total waiting time for patients waiting to start treatment at end of July 2011 (a)**

<b>Local Health Board</b>	<b>Under 26 weeks</b>		<b>Under 36 weeks (b)</b>		<b>Total patients waiting for treatment</b>
	<b>Number of patients waiting</b>	<b>Percentage of all patients waiting</b>	<b>Number of patients waiting</b>	<b>Percentage of all patients waiting</b>	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	75,317	93.8	79,300	98.8	80,291
Aneurin Bevan	75,757	96.6	78,464	100.0	78,464
Betsi Cadwaladr	67,112	93.9	70,016	98.0	71,468
Cardiff and Vale	68,076	88.1	73,323	94.9	77,250
Cwm Taf	31,556	90.0	34,504	98.4	35,065
Hywel Dda	42,252	95.2	44,240	99.7	44,378
Powys	5,135	99.8	5,147	100.0	5,147
<b>Wales</b>	<b>365,205</b>	<b>93.1</b>	<b>384,994</b>	<b>98.2</b>	<b>392,063</b>

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

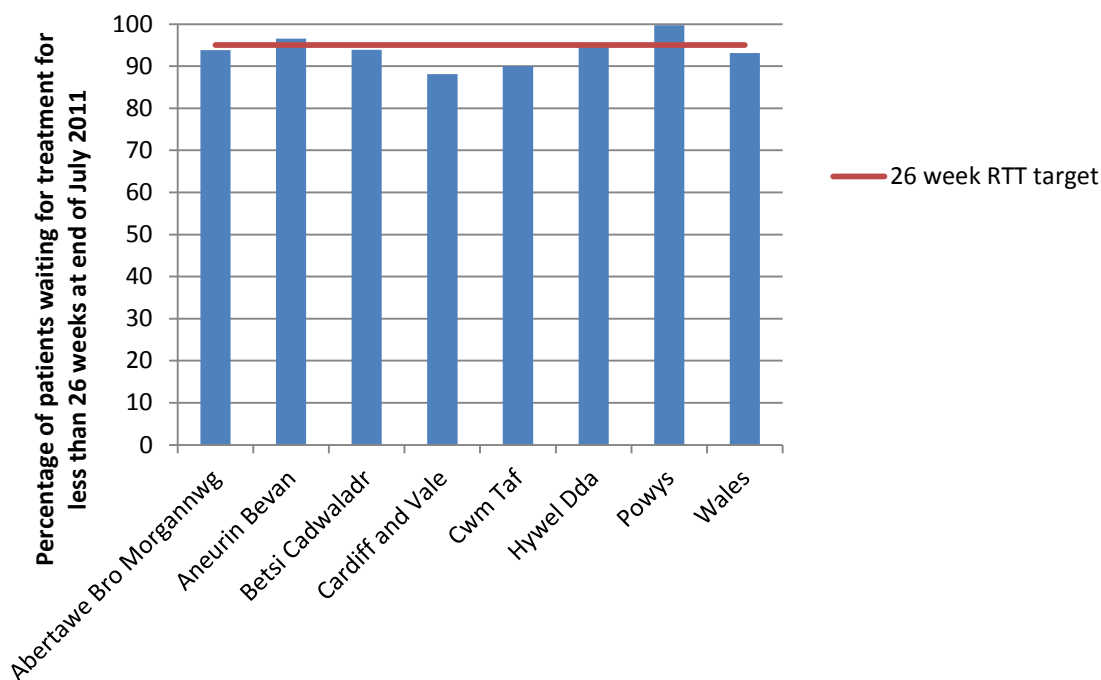
Note:

- (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 for less than 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting for less than 26 weeks and also those waiting between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.

Figure 1 shows the progress of LHBs against the 26 week RTT target for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of July 2011.



**Figure 1: Progress against the 26 week RTT target for patients waiting to start treatment at end of July 2011**



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

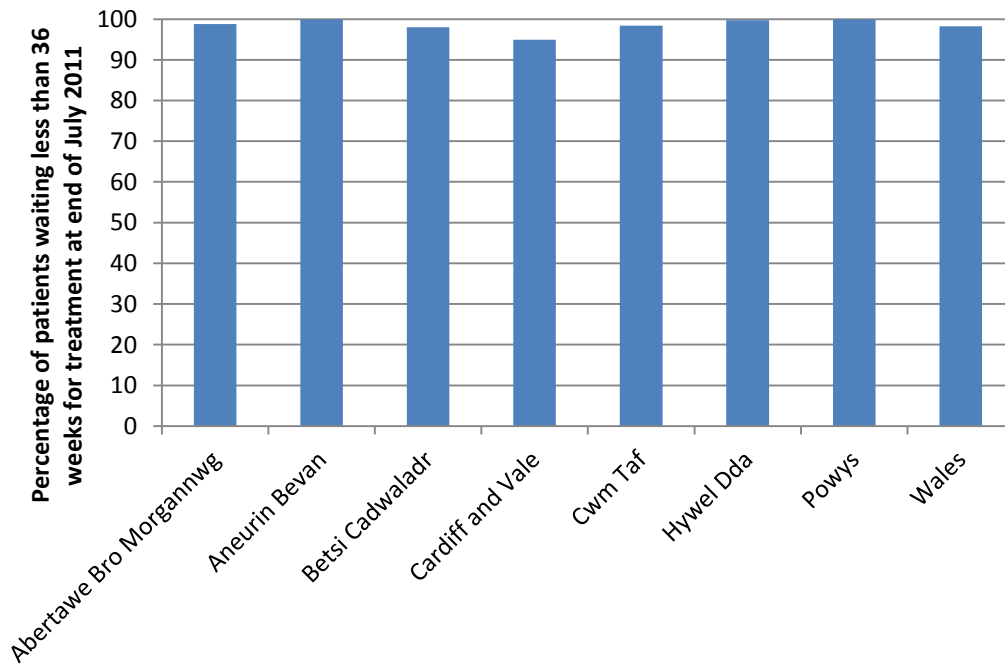
Note:

(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.

- At the end of July 2011, **93.1 per cent of patients in Wales had been waiting to start treatment for less than 26 weeks.**
- **Aneurin Bevan, Hywel Dda and Powys LHBs** achieved the 26 week RTT target for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of July 2011, with over 95 per cent of patients waiting to receive treatment having waited less than 26 weeks.
- Of the LHBs who did not achieve the target, approximately 94 per cent of patients waiting to receive treatment from **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg and Betsi Cadwaladr University LHBs** had been waiting less than 26 weeks, 90 per cent of patients at **Cwm Taf LHB** had been waiting for fewer than 26 weeks, and approximately 88 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 26 weeks to receive treatment from **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.**

Figure 2 shows the percentage of patients who had been waiting for less than 36 weeks to start treatment at the end of July 2011.

**Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting for less than 36 weeks to start treatment at end of July 2011**



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

Note:

(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.

- At the end of July 2011, **98.2 per cent of patients in Wales had been waiting to start treatment for less than 36 weeks.**
- At the end of July 2011, in **Aneurin Bevan and Powys LHBs** 100 per cent of patients waiting to receive treatment had waited less than 36 weeks.
- Of the other LHBs, in all except **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board** at least 98 per cent of patients had been waiting for less than 36 weeks to start treatment at the end of July 2011. In **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board** approximately 95 per cent of patients had been waiting for less than 36 weeks.

### 3. Performance by specialty in July 2011

The Welsh Government publishes monthly figures showing the specialty that patients are waiting to start treatment for. A picture of performance by specialty in July 2011 is provided in Table 2.

**It is important to note that LHBs and the NHS in Wales cannot achieve or fail to achieve an RTT target for individual specialties as the RTT target is applied to performance across all specialties rather than to individual ones; however it is useful to see their relative contributions to the performance of the Welsh NHS against the general RTT targets.**

**Table 2: Waiting time for patients waiting to start treatment at end of July 2011, by specialty (a), (b), (c)**

Specialty	Less than 26 weeks		Less than 36 weeks (a)		All patients still waiting
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
Anaesthetics	631	98.3	642	100.0	642
Audiological Medicine	1,458	100.0	1,458	100.0	1,458
Cardiology	238	97.5	243	99.6	244
Chemical Pathology	216	99.5	217	100.0	217
Clinical Neuro-physiology	147	100.0	147	100.0	147
Dental Medicine Specialties	555	100.0	555	100.0	555
Dermatology	22,379	98.0	22,845	100.0	22,845
Ear, Nose and Throat	29,228	95.7	30,495	99.9	30,530
Endocrinology	2,074	99.8	2,078	100.0	2,078
Gastroenterology	13,986	96.1	14,544	100.0	14,550
General Medicine	11,872	96.4	12,313	100.0	12,316
General Pathology	488	100.0	488	100.0	488
General Surgery	35,397	93.1	37,684	99.2	38,001
Geriatric Medicine	2,276	98.7	2,305	100.0	2,305
Gynaecology	22,728	94.7	23,946	99.8	23,994
Haematology (Clinical)	2,255	98.9	2,280	100.0	2,280
Infectious Diseases	116	86.6	134	100.0	134
Nephrology	1,488	99.7	1,492	100.0	1,492
Neurology	6,309	95.3	6,621	100.0	6,623
Neurosurgery	1,063	81.6	1,210	92.9	1,303
Ophthalmology	32,326	92.8	34,584	99.3	34,827
Oral Surgery	13,328	92.8	14,239	99.2	14,359
Orthodontics	2,462	96.2	2,554	99.8	2,558
Paediatric Dentistry	287	95.7	299	99.7	300
Paediatric Neurology	207	98.6	210	100.0	210
Paediatric Surgery	702	99.0	709	100.0	709
Paediatrics	6,413	98.6	6,501	100.0	6,501
Pain Management	4,090	95.7	4,271	100.0	4,273
Plastic Surgery	2,473	84.8	2,710	92.9	2,916
Rehabilitation	342	99.7	343	100.0	343
Restorative Dentistry	2,025	97.2	2,078	99.7	2,084
Rheumatology	5,867	96.4	6,075	99.9	6,083
Thoracic Medicine	3,969	97.0	4,088	100.0	4,090
Trauma and Orthopedic	53,329	80.4	60,591	91.3	66,343
Urology	17,633	93.6	18,736	99.5	18,829
Direct access Diagnostic Services	22,991	99.9	23,012	100.0	23,012
Direct access Allied Health Profession Services	27,593	100.0	27,593	100.0	27,593
Cardiac Treatment (b)	14,084	96.3	14,505	99.1	14,632
Other (c)	180	90.5	199	100.0	199
<b>Total</b>	<b>365,205</b>	<b>93.1</b>	<b>384,994</b>	<b>98.2</b>	<b>392,063</b>

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

Notes:

- (a) The figures for patients waiting for less than 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting for less than 26 weeks and also those waiting between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the [Welsh Government quality report](#) for further details.
- (c) 'Other' specialties include specialties where there were less than 100 patients waiting to be treated at the end of July 2011. These include Accident and Emergency, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, GP Maternity, GP Other, Medical Oncology, Palliative Medicine and Radiotherapy.

- Of the 38 specialties (excluding the 'other' specialties category) covered by the 26 week general RTT target, over 95 per cent of patients had been waiting for treatment for less than 26 weeks at the end of July 2011 in 29 of them.
- Of the 9 specialties where this was not the case, less than 85 per cent of patients had been waiting for treatment for less than 26 weeks at the end of July 2011 in 3 of them; neurosurgery, plastic surgery and trauma and orthopaedic.
- Of the 38 specialties (excluding the 'other' specialties category), all patients had been waiting for treatment for less than 36 weeks at the end of July 2011 in 19 of them. For a further 4 specialties a very small number of patients had been waiting for more than 36 weeks, but to 1 decimal place 100 per cent of patients had been waiting for less than 36 weeks.
- Of the 15 specialties where this was not the case, at least 99 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in all but 3 of them. Again, these were the neurosurgery, plastic surgery and trauma and orthopaedic specialties.

Patients waiting for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty make up approximately 17 per cent of all patients waiting for treatment in specialties covered by the general and cardiac RTT targets. This is the largest proportion of all of the specialties covered by the targets. Table 3 shows the figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty for July 2011 for LHBs in Wales. The figures are for cases where the LHB is the provider, in order to be able to scrutinise performance at a local level.

**Table 3: Waiting time for patients waiting to start treatment at end of July 2011, trauma and orthopaedic specialty (a)**

<b>Local Health Board</b>	<b>Under 26 weeks</b>		<b>Under 36 weeks (a)</b>		<b>Total patients waiting for treatment</b>
	<b>Number of patients waiting</b>	<b>Percentage of patients waiting</b>	<b>Number of patients waiting</b>	<b>Percentage of all patients waiting</b>	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	11,059	86.6	12,345	96.7	12,771
Aneurin Bevan	11,980	89.6	13,369	100.0	13,369
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,799	78.1	9,834	87.2	11,272
Cardiff and Vale	9,402	62.6	11,521	76.7	15,019
Cwm Taf	4,898	81.6	5,747	95.8	6,000
Hywel Dda	6,775	90.5	7,351	98.2	7,488
Powys	416	98.1	424	100.0	424
<b>Wales</b>	<b>53,329</b>	<b>80.4</b>	<b>60,591</b>	<b>91.3</b>	<b>66,343</b>

Source: Stats Wales [016964], plus Research Service calculations.

Note:

(a) The figures for patients waiting for less than 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting for less than 26 weeks and also those waiting between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.

- In July 2011, at least 95 per cent of patients requiring treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty had been waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in **Powys LHB**.
- In the other LHBs, performance ranged from approximately 90 per cent of patients having waited less than 26 weeks for treatment in **Aneurin Bevan and Hywel Dda LHBs**, to approximately 63 per cent of patients in **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**.
- In July 2011, all patients requiring treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty had been waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in **Aneurin Bevan and Powys LHBs**.
- In the other LHBs, performance ranged from over 95 per cent of patients having waited less than 36 weeks for treatment in **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg, Cwm Taf and Hywel Dda LHBs**, to approximately 77 per cent of patients in **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**.

#### 4. Referral to Treatment performance since October 2010

This section of the research paper provides an in-depth focus on progress against the RTT target at an all-Wales level. While future papers will consider progress over the last calendar year since the latest available figures, this paper will consider progress since October 2010. This is because in October 2010 a number of technical changes to the measurement system for RTT took place. These changes relate to the management of patients with complex clinical pathways, patients who do not attend agreed appointments, patients who refuse to change consultants, the management of planned trauma patients and patients referred directly for diagnostic and therapy services.<sup>6</sup>

Table 4 shows the progress against the RTT target for the NHS in Wales for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of each month since October 2010 up to the latest figures for July 2011. Figures for the number and percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at the end of each month are also included.

**Table 4: Total waiting time for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of month for October 2010 to July 2011 (a), (b)**

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	
October 2010	324,581	94.9	339,272	99.2	341,858
November 2010	321,249	94.7	336,106	99.1	339,173
December 2010	319,889	93.5	337,968	98.8	341,981
January 2011	311,168	92.9	329,990	98.6	334,796
February 2011	317,469	93.1	335,712	98.4	341,008
March 2011	334,351	94.2	349,914	98.5	355,100
April 2011	331,018	93.0	350,015	98.4	355,859
May 2011	350,162	92.4	372,365	98.2	379,109
June 2011	360,342	93.0	380,566	98.2	387,436
July 2011	365,205	93.1	384,994	98.2	392,063

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

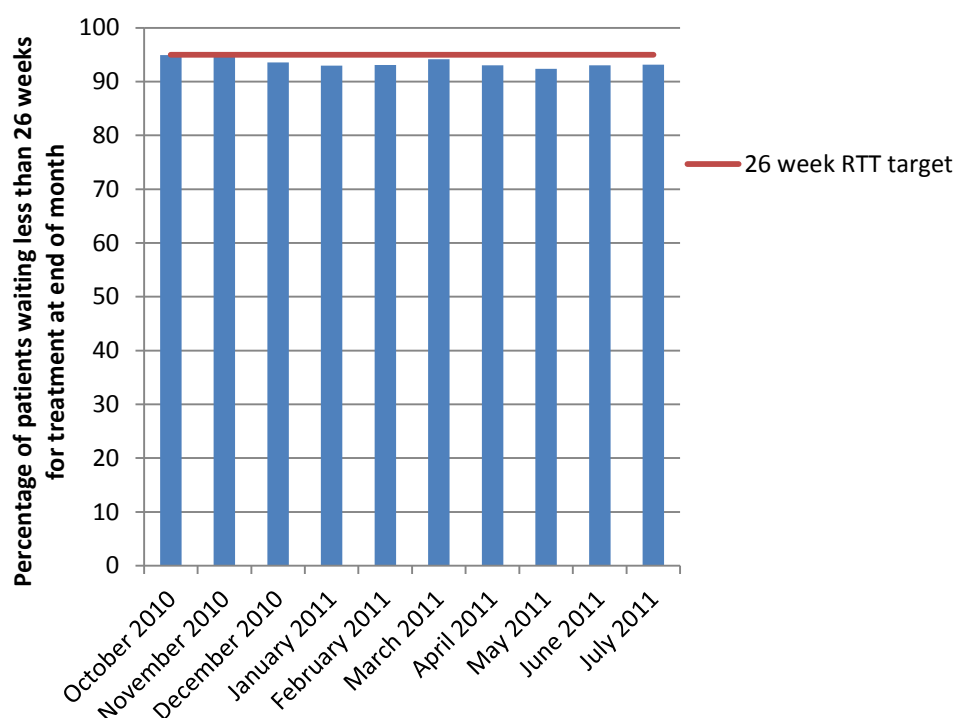
Notes:

- (a) 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 for less than 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting for less than 26 weeks and also those waiting between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – July 2011](#), 8 September 2011 [accessed 8 September 2011]

Figure 3 shows the progress against the 26 week RTT target at an all-Wales level for patients waiting to be treated at the end of each month from October 2010 to July 2011.

Figure 3: Progress of the NHS in Wales against the 26 week RTT target for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of month for October 2010 to July 2011 (a)



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

Notes:

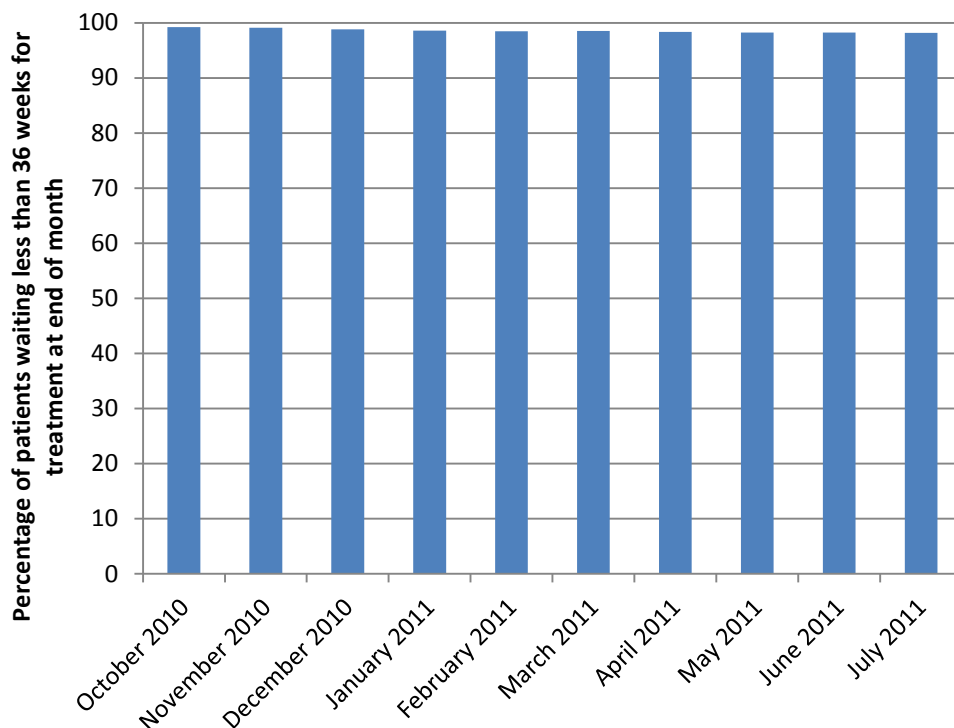
(a) Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the [Welsh Government quality report](#) for further details.

- As can be seen from Figure 3, the NHS in Wales has not met the 26 week target for at least 95 per cent of patients to have been waiting for less than 26 weeks to start treatment at the end of any of the 10 months from October 2010 to July 2011.
- **Performance has ranged from 94.9 per cent of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in October 2010 to 92.4 per cent in May 2011.** There was a slight improvement in the number of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment at the end of July 2011 in comparison to June 2011, with 93.1 per cent of patients having waited less than 26 weeks, compared to 93.0 per cent in June 2011.



Figure 4 shows the percentage of patients who had been waiting less than 36 weeks to start treatment at an all-Wales level for each month from October 2010 to July 2011.

**Figure 4: Percentage of patients who had been waiting less than 36 weeks to start treatment at the end of month for October 2010 to July 2011 (a)**



Source: Stats Wales [\[016965\]](#) and [\[016964\]](#), plus Research Service calculations

Notes:

(a) Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the [Welsh Government quality report](#) for further details.

- **In the NHS in Wales 99.2 per cent of patients were waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in October 2010, compared to 98.2 per cent in May, June and July 2011. The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks to start treatment has either remained the same or decreased for each month since October 2010.**

## Annex: Notes

The Welsh Government publishes a detailed [\*NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times Quality Report\*](#) on waiting time statistics.

The quality report includes information on definitions and coverage, as well as other aspects of quality such as timeliness, relevance and comparability. Specific issues raised by the Welsh Government in the Referral to Treatment statistical release for July 2011 include information on changes to RTT reporting and the use of estimates in some LHB data:<sup>7</sup>

### **Changes to Referral to Treatment Time (RTT) reporting implemented from October 2010**

From October 2010, there were a number of technical changes to the measurement system for RTT. The changes relate to the management of patients who have complex clinical pathways, patients who do not attend agreed appointments, patients who refuse to change consultants, the management of planned trauma patients and patients referred directly for diagnostic and therapy services.

Details are published in the Welsh Government release [\*Technical Changes to Referral to Treatment \(RTT\) rules with effect from October 2010\*](#).

### **Estimates**

Pembrokeshire data in Hywel Dda LHB is missing from the April 2011 data, and an estimate is not possible. Hywel Dda LHB did not submit complete information for the period September 2010 to February 2011, due to the migration of Pembrokeshire Patient Administration System in September 2010, which prevented the Pembrokeshire division submitting any data. Therefore, this publication contains August 2010 data as an estimate for the Pembrokeshire division's September 2010 to February 2011 data.

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University LHB are experiencing problems since the migration of their Patient Administration System, this is affecting their figures for patients treated since March (closed pathways for reasons other than admission).

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<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government, [\*NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – July 2011\*](#), 8 September 2011 [accessed 8 September 2011]

