

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

October 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.¹ **The RTT is the period of time from referral, by a GP or other medical practitioner, to hospital for treatment.**²

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.

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. The LHB figures included in this release are for patients treated by each LHB rather

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 4, 14 June 2012 [accessed 9 October 2014]

² Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, August 2014](#), 9 October 2014 [accessed 9 October 2014]

³ *ibid*

than the LHB they live in.

On 13 March 2014 the Minister for Health and Social Services, Mark Drakeford, announced new funding of £5 million to go towards cutting waits for diagnostic tests.⁴ The Minister stated that improving speed of access to these tests will mean that patients can start their full treatment more quickly, meaning that overall waiting times should reduce.

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in August 2014

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 August 2014.⁵ It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- In August 2014, neither the 26 week nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.
- Powys Teaching Health Board achieved both the 26 week and the 36 week referral to treatment waiting time target in August 2014.
- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board was the worst performing LHB for the 26 week target. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board were the worst performing LHBs for the 36 week target.

⁴ Welsh Government, [New funding to speed up access to treatment](#), 13 March 2014 [accessed 9 October 2014]

⁵ Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, August 2014](#), 9 October 2014 [accessed 9 October 2014]



Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of August 2014 (a), (c),

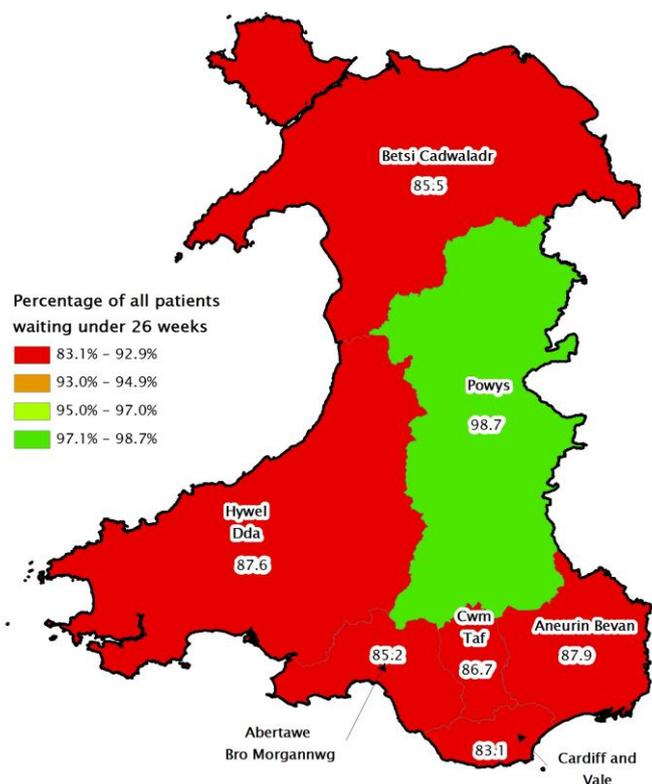
Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	71,533	85.2	79,731	95.0	4,220	83,951
Aneurin Bevan	70,558	87.9	77,449	96.4	2,866	80,315
Betsi Cadwaladr	73,936	85.5	81,706	94.5	4,739	86,445
Cardiff and Vale	69,685	83.1	79,280	94.5	4,588	83,868
Cwm Taf	36,220	86.7	40,221	96.3	1,563	41,784
Hywel Dda	49,798	87.6	54,703	96.2	2,175	56,878
Powys	5,283	98.7	5,350	100.0	.	5,350
Wales	377,013	86.0	418,440	95.4	20,151	438,591

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 **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) The values in the purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time target in August 2014.

Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment at end of August 2014

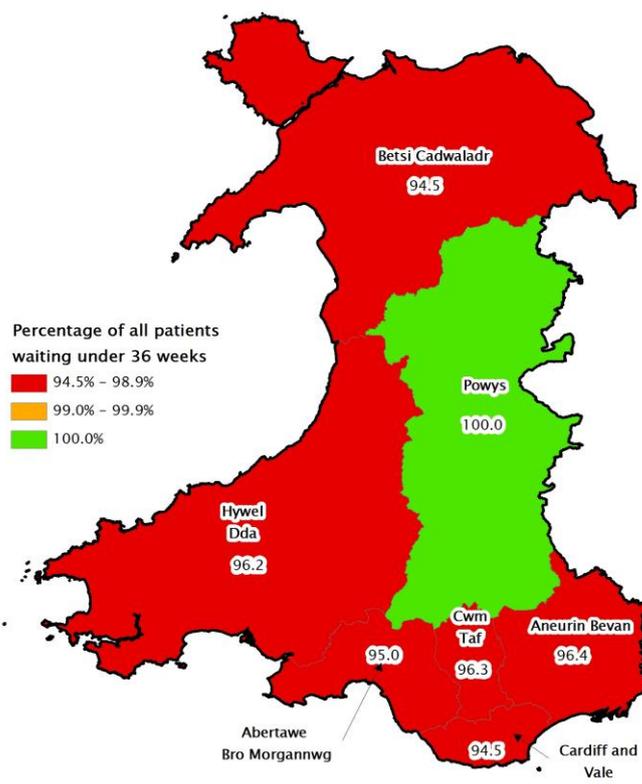


Source: Statswales

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Contains Ordnance Survey data.

Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of August 2014



Source: Statswales

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Contains Ordnance Survey data.



Performance against RTT waiting time targets since August 2013

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since August 2013.⁶

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 August 2013 and August 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in August 2014 was 1.2 percentage points lower than in July 2014, and the lowest of any point over the past year.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in August 2014 was 0.5 percentage points lower than in July 2014, and the lowest of any point over the past year.
- The number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was 7,000 more than in August 2013.
- 20,000 more people were waiting for treatment at the end of August 2014 compared to August 2013. The number of patients waiting for treatment at the end of August 2014 is the highest at any point over the past year, and also since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.⁷

Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, August 2013 to August 2014 (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	
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	360,170	86.6	401,045	96.5	14,745	415,790
January 2014	357,719	86.8	396,043	96.1	16,109	412,152
February 2014	364,004	87.9	398,675	96.3	15,388	414,063
March 2014	371,877	88.9	407,856	97.5	10,586	418,442
April 2014	371,744	87.7	411,214	97.0	12,795	424,009
May 2014	371,205	86.3	414,864	96.4	15,498	430,362
June 2014	379,870	87.3	418,716	96.2	16,400	435,116
July 2014	378,301	87.2	416,090	95.9	17,649	433,739
August 2014	377,013	86.0	418,440	95.4	20,151	438,591

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks**

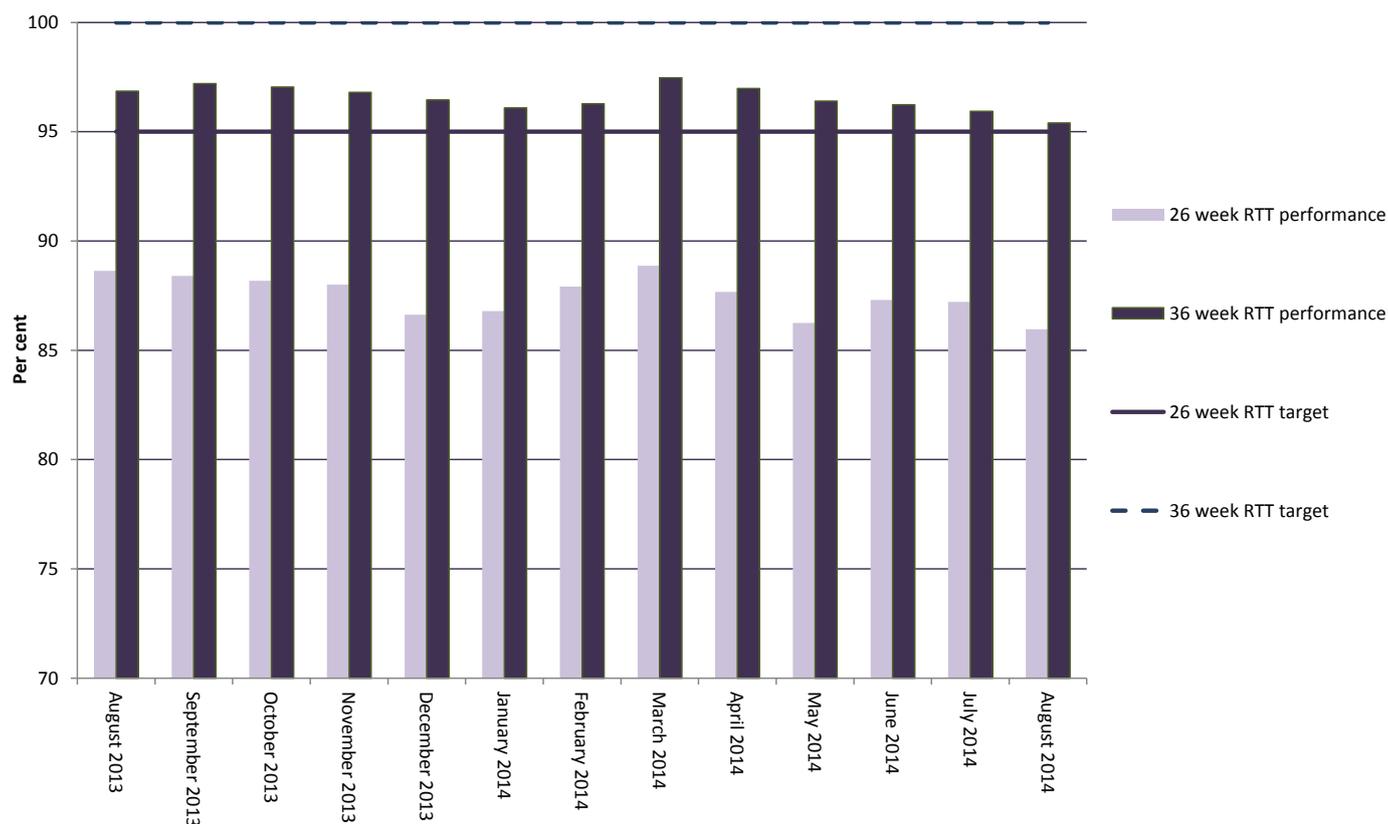
Notes:

- (a) This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the **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.

⁶ Welsh Government, Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks** [accessed 9 October 2014]

⁷ Welsh Government, Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks** [accessed 9 October 2014]

Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from August 2013 to August 2014



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 allied 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.⁸

⁸ Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), [Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update](#), Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 9 October 2014]

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.⁹

⁹ Welsh Government, [Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs](#), page 38, October 2012 [accessed 9 October 2014]



Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of August 2014.

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of August 2014, (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	7,843	71.7	9,408	86.1	10,932
Aneurin Bevan	11,052	77.5	12,766	89.5	14,259
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,039	67.0	10,085	84.0	12,001
Cardiff and Vale	8,168	86.3	9,170	96.9	9,460
Cwm Taf	3,984	84.7	4,500	95.7	4,704
Hywel Dda	6,055	76.5	6,925	87.5	7,911
Powys	495	99.0	500	100.0	500
Wales	45,636	76.4	53,354	89.3	59,767

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

Notes:

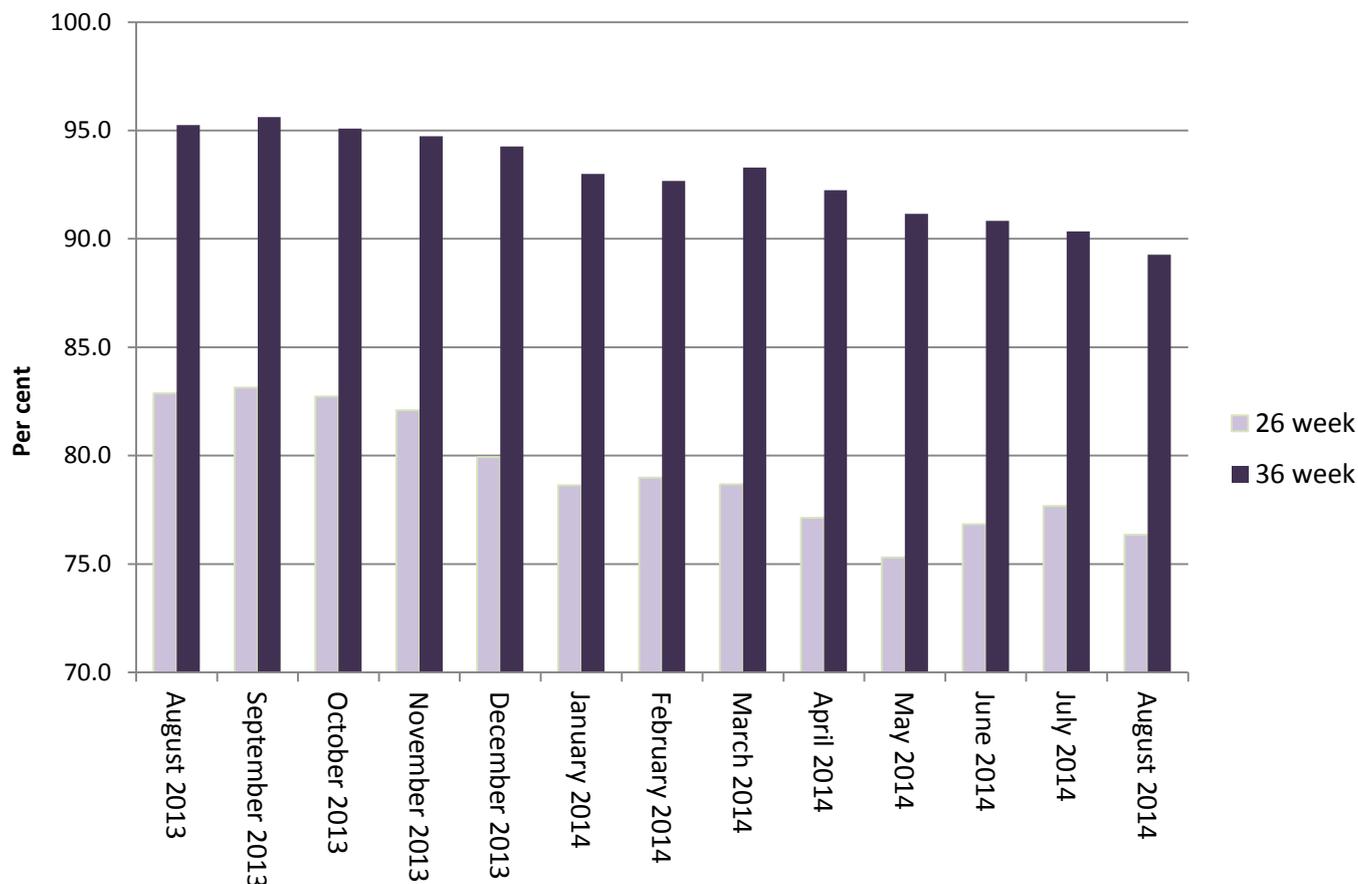
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in August 2014 equal to or above that needed to achieve the waiting time targets.

In August 2014, 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 87 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 97 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under 26 and 36 weeks was **Betsi Cadwaladr 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 August 2013 to August 2014.

Figure 4: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, from August 2013 to August 2014



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

- For each month since August 2013, 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 August 2014 was 1.3 percentage points lower than July 2014. This was the second lowest of any month over the past year and also since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.¹⁰
- For each month since August 2013, 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 August 2014 was the lowest of any point over the past year, and since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011. It decreased by 1.0 percentage points compared to July 2014.

¹⁰ Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 9 October 2014]



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, August 2014](#)
- 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), **Research Service**.

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