

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

May 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.**

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

<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 8 May 2014]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, March 2014](#), 8 May 2014 [accessed 8 May 2014]

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

than by LHB of residence, which are also published on Stats Wales.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 March 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 March 2014.<sup>6</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- In **March 2014**, neither the 26 week nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.
- **Powys Teaching Health Board** achieved the 26 week referral to treatment waiting time target in March 2014. In Powys, one patient was waiting more than 36 weeks for treatment since referral.
- **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for the 26 week target. **Hywel Dda Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for the 36 week target.

<sup>4</sup> Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#) [accessed 8 May 2014]

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, [New funding to speed up access to treatment, 13 March 2014](#) [accessed 8 May 2014]

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, March 2014](#), 8 May 2014 [accessed 8 May 2014]

Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of March 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	71,538	88.5	78,701	97.4	2,095	80,796
Aneurin Bevan	70,842	91.5	76,564	98.8	891	77,455
Betsi Cadwaladr	75,729	87.7	83,403	96.6	2,911	86,314
Cardiff and Vale	65,772	86.4	73,996	97.3	2,088	76,084
Cwm Taf	33,814	90.5	36,728	98.3	638	37,366
Hywel Dda	48,370	88.7	52,571	96.4	1,962	54,533
Powys	5,812	98.6	5,893	100.0	1	5,894
<b>Wales</b>	<b>371,877</b>	<b>88.9</b>	<b>407,856</b>	<b>97.5</b>	<b>10,586</b>	<b>418,442</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 **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 value in the purple shaded box met the referral to treatment waiting time target in March 2014.
- (d) Powys Health Board's figure showing 100% of patients waiting under 36 weeks is due to rounding, a more precise figure is 99.98%, as shown on the maps below.

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

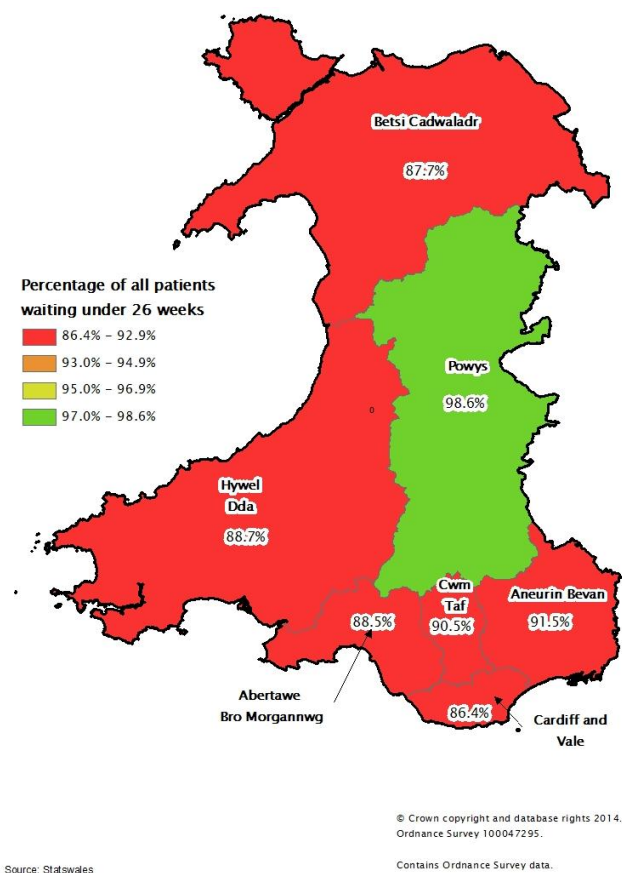
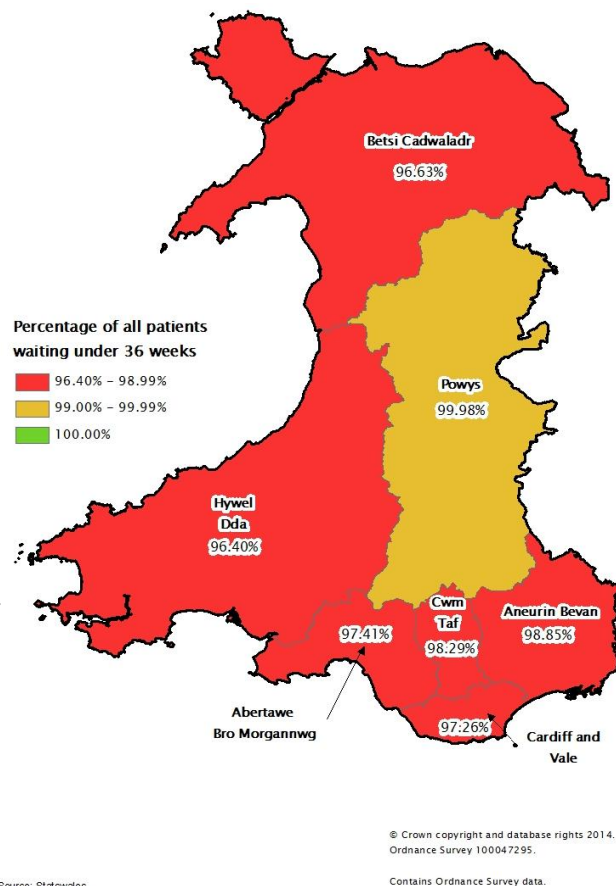


Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of March 2014



## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since March 2013

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since March 2013.<sup>7</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 March 2013 and March 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in March 2014 was 1.0 percentage points higher than in February 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in March 2014 was 1.2 percentage points higher than in February 2014.
- The number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was the lowest since June 2013.
- Over 28,000 more people were waiting for treatment at the end of March 2014 compared to March 2013.

**Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, March 2013 to March 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	
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	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

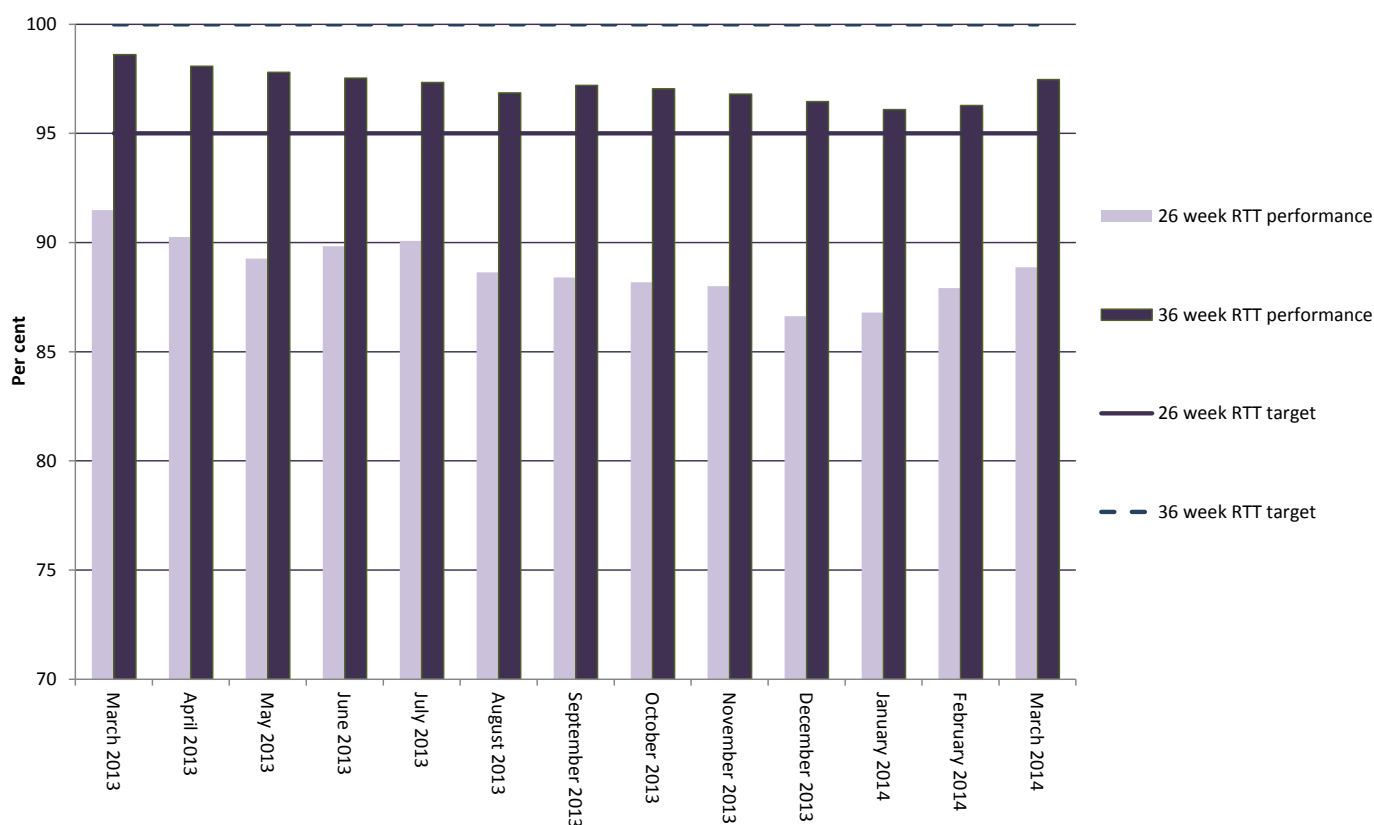
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks**

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.
- (c) The Welsh Government has issued revised figures for December 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks** [accessed 8 May 2014]

Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from March 2013 to March 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 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>8</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

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

with the purpose of sustaining improvements in orthopaedic waiting times.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government, [Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs](#), page 38, October 2012 [accessed 8 May 2014]

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

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of March 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	7,982	78.1	9,516	93.1	10,219
Aneurin Bevan	10,481	83.4	12,116	96.4	12,567
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,779	74.9	10,785	92.0	11,726
Cardiff and Vale	7,302	86.2	8,353	98.6	8,470
Cwm Taf	3,622	82.4	4,292	97.6	4,396
Hywel Dda	5,574	67.0	6,866	82.5	8,320
Powys	425	96.6	440	100.0	440
<b>Wales</b>	<b>44,165</b>	<b>78.7</b>	<b>52,368</b>	<b>93.3</b>	<b>56,138</b>

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

Notes:

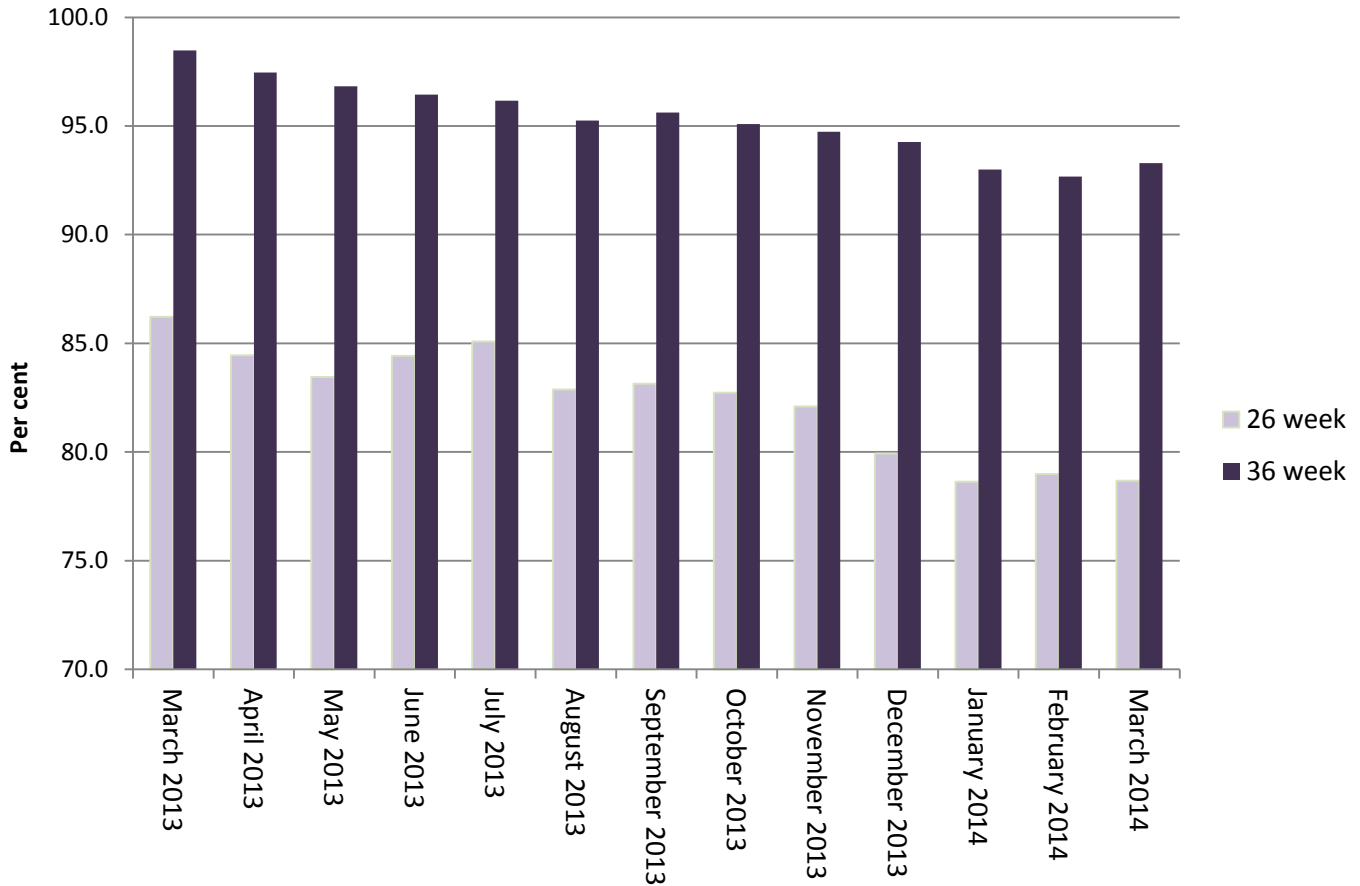
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in March 2014 equal to or above that needed to achieve the waiting time targets.

In March 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 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 March 2013 to March 2014.

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



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

- For each month since March 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 March 2014 was 0.3 percentage points lower than February 2014, and was the second lowest of any month over the past year.
- For each month since March 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 March 2014 was the third lowest of any point over the past year, and increased by 0.6 percentage points compared to February 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, March 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](mailto:Nigel.Barwise@wales.gov.uk)), **Research Service**.

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**Enquiry no: 14/1334**