

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

February 2013

## 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.

<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 1, 14 June 2012 [accessed 14 February 2013]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – December 2012](#), 14 February 2013 [accessed 14 February 2013]

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – December 2012](#), 14 February 2013 [accessed 14 February 2013]

## NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in December 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 December 2012.<sup>4</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- **In December 2012, neither the 26 nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.**
- **Powys LHB** achieved the 26 week referral to treatment waiting time target in December 2012.
- **Powys LHB** met the 36 week target in December 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 December 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	66,469	92.9	71,162	99.5	71,550
Aneurin Bevan	72,751	90.0	80,417	99.5	80,859
Betsi Cadwaladr	71,085	91.4	77,185	99.3	77,751
Cardiff and Vale	65,116	88.1	71,672	96.9	73,938
Cwm Taf	29,720	90.5	32,226	98.2	32,825
Hywel Dda	42,146	89.9	45,729	97.5	46,894
Powys	5,110	98.2	5,202	100.0	5,202
<b>Wales</b>	<b>352,397</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>383,593</b>	<b>98.6</b>	<b>389,019</b>

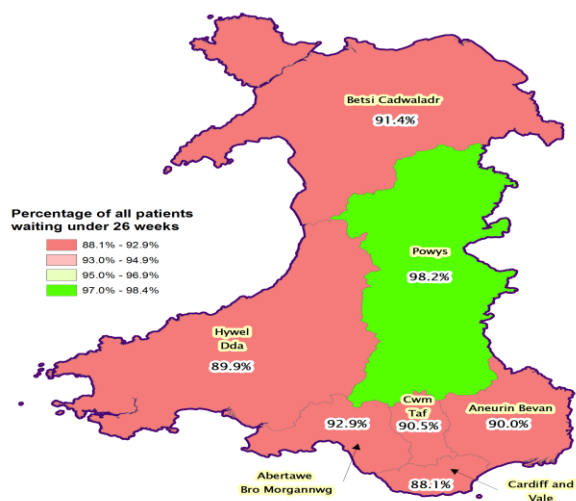
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#), 14 February 2013

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 [Welsh Government 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 2012.

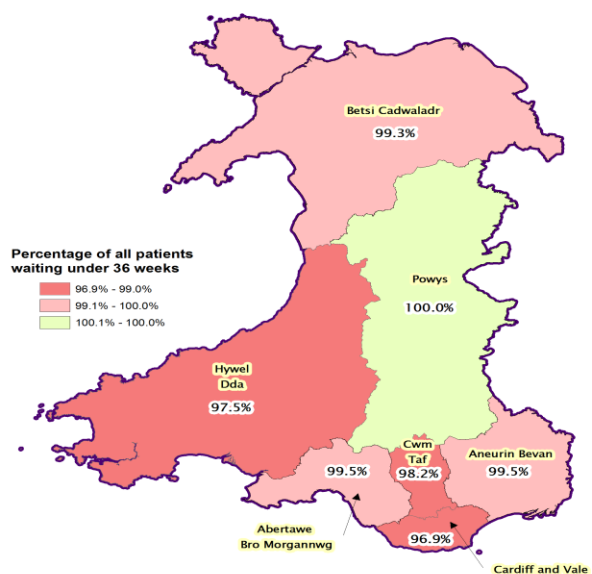
<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – December 2012](#), 14 February 2013 [accessed 14 February 2013]

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



Source: Statswales © Crown copyright and database rights 2013. Ordnance Survey 100047295

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



Source: Statswales © Crown copyright and database rights 2013. Ordnance Survey 100047295

## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since December 2011

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since December 2011.<sup>5</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 2011 and December 2012.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in December 2012 decreased by 0.5 percentage points from November 2012, and was the lowest in any month since December 2011.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks in December 2012 was 0.3 percentage point lower than that in November 2012, and was the lowest since January 2012.

Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, December 2011 to December 2012 (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	
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
August 2012	373,777	91.9	403,258	99.2	406,686
September 2012	364,953	91.1	397,421	99.2	400,622
October 2012	366,009	91.5	396,466	99.1	400,199
November 2012	358,643	91.1	389,049	98.9	393,474
December 2012	352,397	90.6	383,593	98.6	389,019

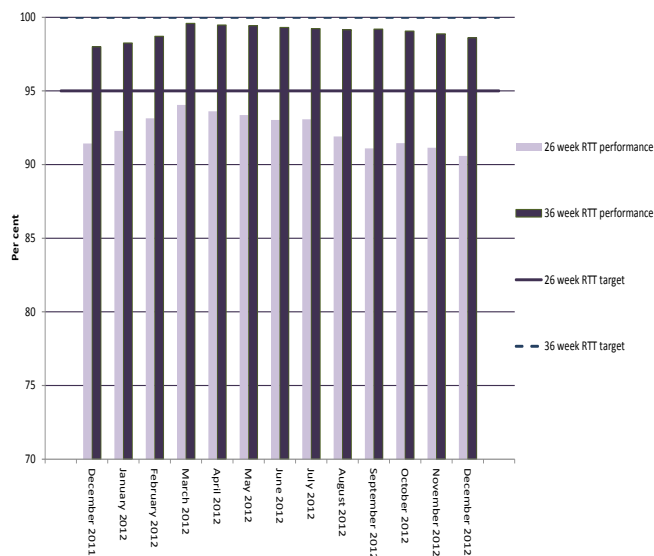
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks**

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.

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks** [accessed 14 February 2013]

**Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from December 2011 to December 2012**



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 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.<sup>6</sup>

In 2011-12, the Welsh Government invested £21.5 million in orthopaedic services. In its Draft Budget 2013-14 it states that this investment enabled the number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty decreased from almost 6,000 in June 2011 to 356 in March 2012.<sup>7</sup> The Welsh Government allocated an additional £15 million in 2012-13 to deal with the

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), **Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update**, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 14 February 2013]

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government, **Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs**, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 14 February 2013]

increased demand for orthopaedic treatment.<sup>8</sup> It has also 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>9</sup>

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of December 2012.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of December 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	8,810	88.2	9,962	99.8	9,986
Aneurin Bevan	10,487	86.5	12,096	99.8	12,126
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,247	88.9	8,079	99.1	8,151
Cardiff and Vale	7,728	85.8	8,686	96.4	9,010
Cwm Taf	3,467	87.4	3,873	97.6	3,969
Hywel Dda	6,716	78.5	7,983	93.3	8,558
Powys	485	96.2	504	100.0	504
<b>Wales</b>	<b>44,940</b>	<b>85.9</b>	<b>51,183</b>	<b>97.9</b>	<b>52,304</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 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 **Powys Teaching Health Board**, all patients had been waiting under 36 weeks for treatment.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under 26 and 36 weeks was **Hywel Dda Local Health Board**.

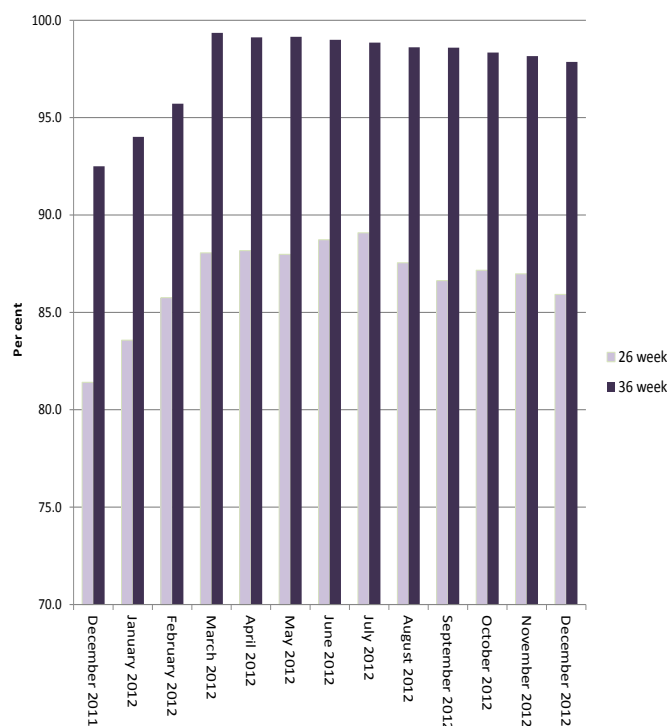
<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government, **Draft Budget 2012-13: A Budget for Growth and Jobs**, page 24, October 2011 [accessed 14 February 2013]

<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government, **Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs**, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 14 February 2013]

<sup>10</sup> Stats Wales **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting** [accessed 14 February 2013]

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 2011 to December 2012.<sup>11</sup>

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



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

- For each month since December 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**. The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks in December 2012 was the lowest since February 2012.
- For each month since December 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**. The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks in December 2012 was the lowest since February 2012.

## 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, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – December 2012](#)
- 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 Gareth Thomas ([GarethDavid.Thomas@wales.gov.uk](mailto:GarethDavid.Thomas@wales.gov.uk)), Research Service.

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