

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

March 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.**

<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 14 March 2014]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, January 2014](#), 13 March 2014 [accessed 13 March 2014]

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 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 January 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 January 2014.<sup>6</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

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

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#) [accessed 13 March 2014]

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, [New funding to speed up access to treatment](#), 13 March 2014 [accessed 14 March 2014]

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, January 2014](#), 13 March 2014 [accessed 13 March 2014]

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

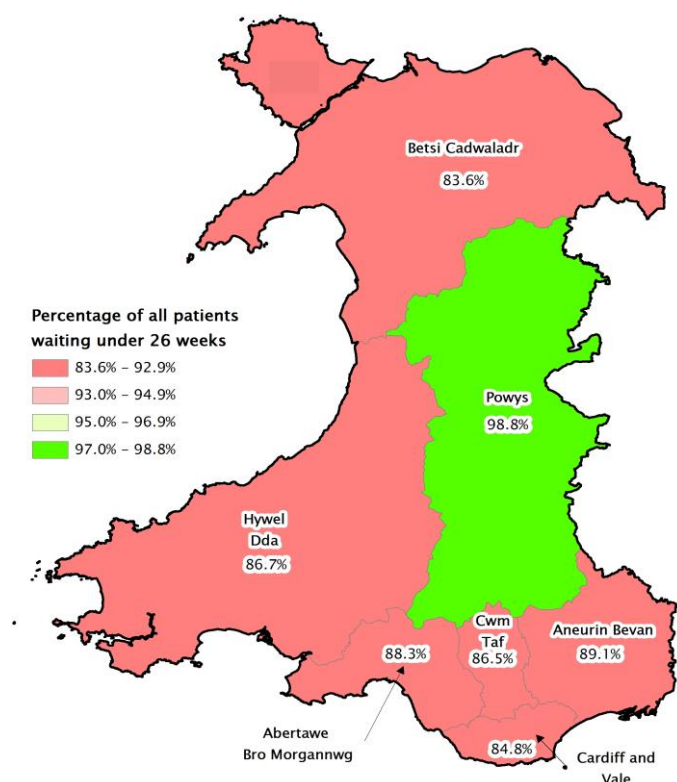
Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	70,327	87.3	77,966	96.8	2,577	80,543
Aneurin Bevan	69,056	89.2	75,660	97.7	1,752	77,412
Betsi Cadwaladr	71,402	84.8	79,535	94.5	4,668	84,203
Cardiff and Vale	65,304	85.0	73,506	95.7	3,311	76,817
Cwm Taf	31,829	87.3	35,090	96.3	1,363	36,453
Hywel Dda	44,483	86.7	48,881	95.2	2,438	51,319
Powys	5,318	98.4	5,405	100.0	.	5,405
<b>Wales</b>	<b>357,719</b>	<b>86.8</b>	<b>396,043</b>	<b>96.1</b>	<b>16,109</b>	<b>412,152</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 **NHS Wales 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) Values in the purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time targets in January 2014.

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

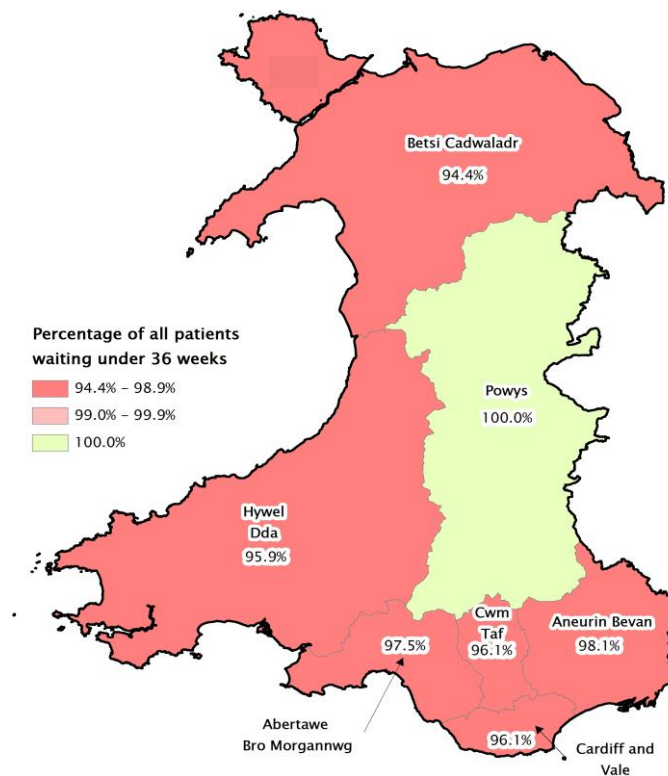


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Ordnance Survey 100047295.

Source: Statswales

Contains Ordnance Survey data.

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



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Ordnance Survey 100047295.

Source: Statswales

Contains Ordnance Survey data.

## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since January 2013

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since January 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 January 2013 and January 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in January 2014 was 0.2 percentage points higher than in December 2013, and was the second lowest of any month over the past year.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in January 2014 was 0.4 percentage points lower than in December 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.
- The number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was the highest of any month over the past year.
- Over 29,000 more people were waiting for treatment at the end of January 2014 compared to January 2013.

**Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, January 2013 to January 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	
January 2013	347,156	90.7	375,840	98.2	6,850	382,690
February 2013	352,892	91.5	379,131	98.3	6,390	385,521
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

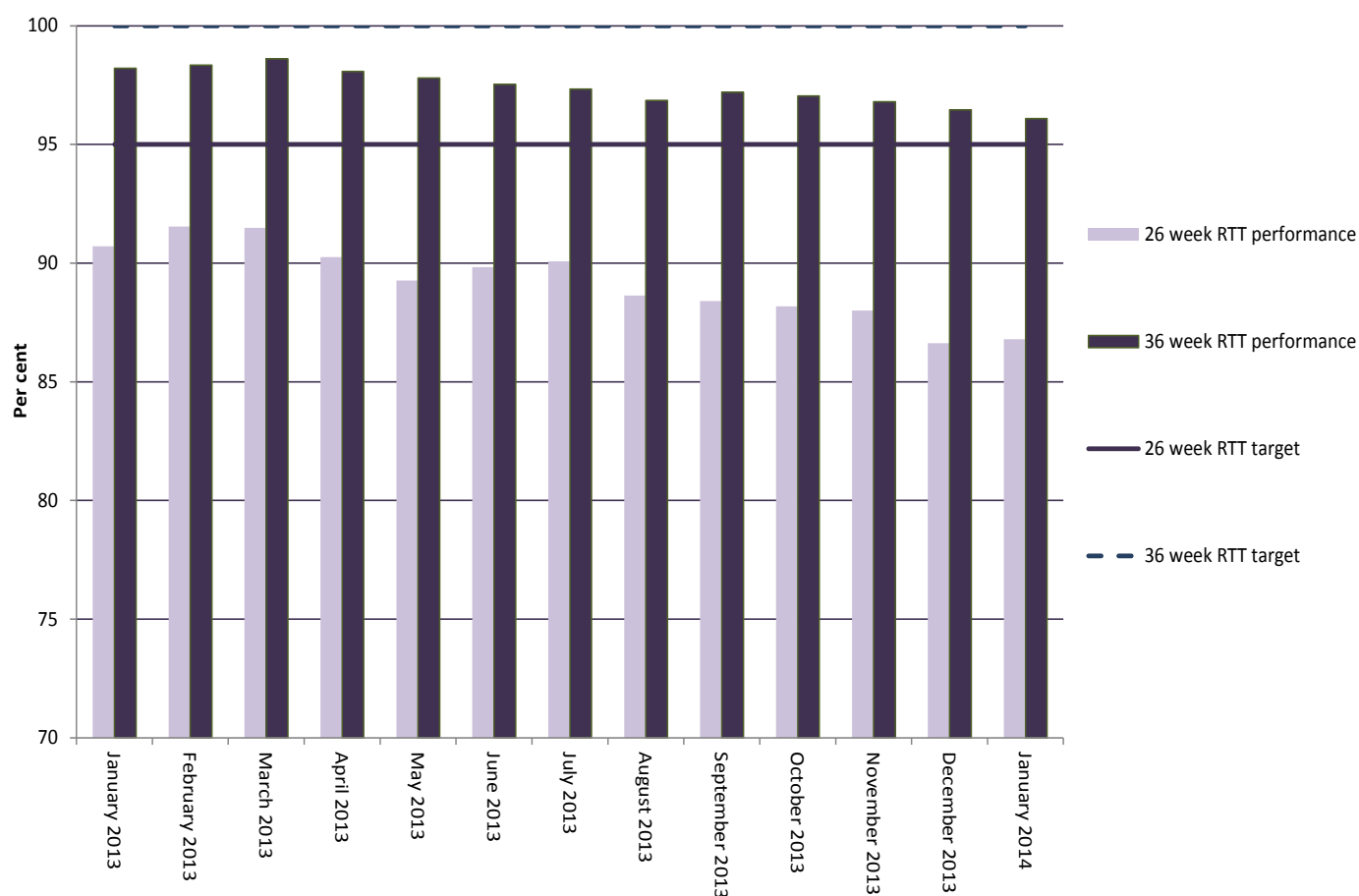
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#)

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 [NHS Wales 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 13 March 2014]

Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from January 2013 to January 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 with the purpose of sustaining improvements in orthopaedic waiting times.<sup>9</sup>

<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 14 March 2014]

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

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

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of January 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	7,876	77.2	9,426	92.4	10,196
Aneurin Bevan	10,110	84.9	11,590	97.4	11,905
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,444	73.8	10,404	91.0	11,438
Cardiff and Vale	7,555	86.3	8,518	97.3	8,750
Cwm Taf	3,419	77.5	4,043	91.7	4,410
Hywel Dda	5,957	69.6	7,369	86.1	8,555
Powys	477	97.1	491	100.0	491
<b>Wales</b>	<b>43,838</b>	<b>78.6</b>	<b>51,841</b>	<b>93.0</b>	<b>55,745</b>

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

Notes:

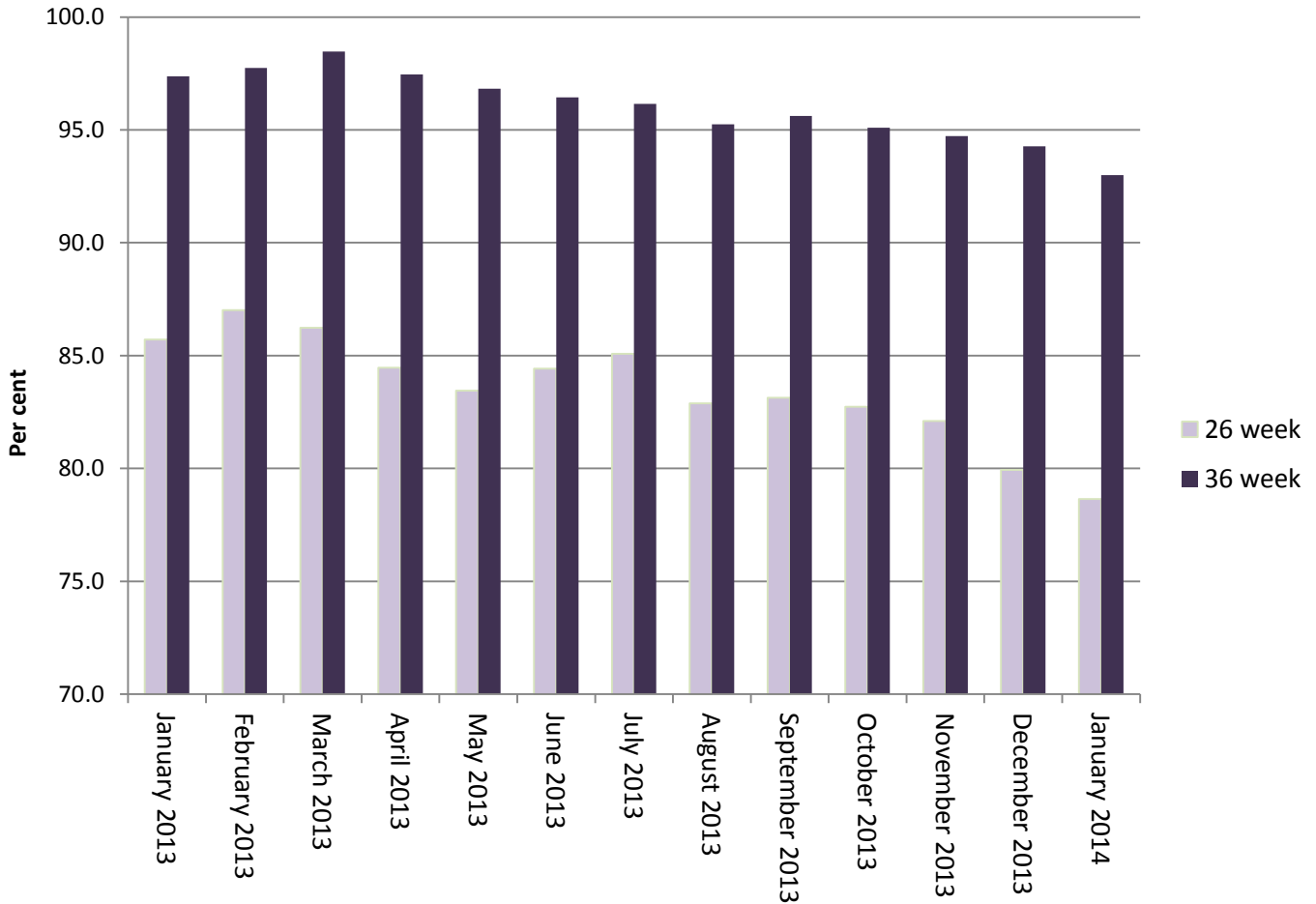
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in January 2014 equal to or above that needed to achieve the waiting time targets.

In January 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 98 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 January 2013 to January 2014.

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



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

- For each month since January 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 January 2014 was 1.3 percentage points lower than December 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.

- For each month since January 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 January 2014 was the lowest of any point over the past year, and decreased by 1.3 percentage points compared to December 2013.

## 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, January 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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