

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

June 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.**

<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 17 June 2013]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – April 2013](#), 13 June 2013 [accessed 17 June 2013]

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 than by LHB of residence, which are also published on Stats Wales.<sup>4</sup>

## NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in April 2013

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 April 2013.<sup>5</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- **In April 2013, 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 April 2013.
- **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for both targets.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#) [accessed 17 June 2013]

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – April 2013](#), 13 June 2013 [accessed 17 June 2013]

**Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of April 2013 (a), (c)**

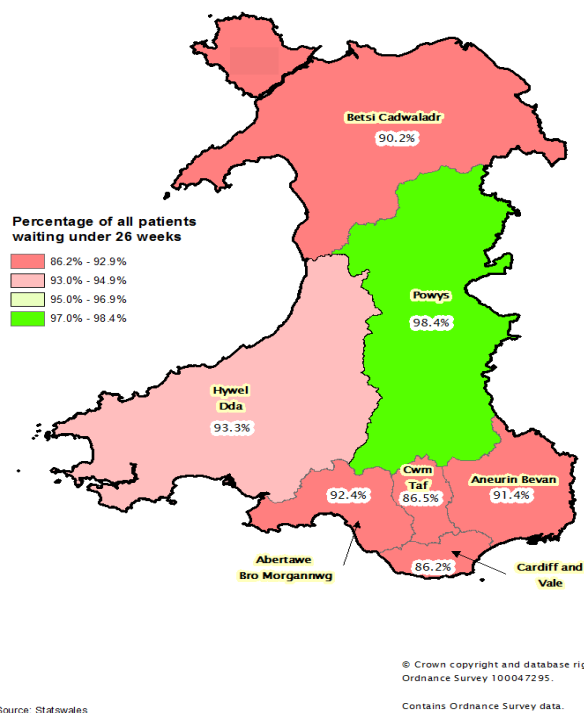
Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	66,655	92.4	71,468	99.0	72,158
Aneurin Bevan	71,428	91.4	77,533	99.2	78,172
Betsi Cadwaladr	75,012	90.2	81,756	98.3	83,157
Cardiff and Vale	63,207	86.2	70,239	95.8	73,328
Cwm Taf	30,583	86.5	34,064	96.3	35,356
Hywel Dda	44,835	93.3	47,556	99.0	48,056
Powys	5,773	98.4	5,865	100.0	5,865
<b>Wales</b>	<b>357,493</b>	<b>90.3</b>	<b>388,481</b>	<b>98.1</b>	<b>396,092</b>

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

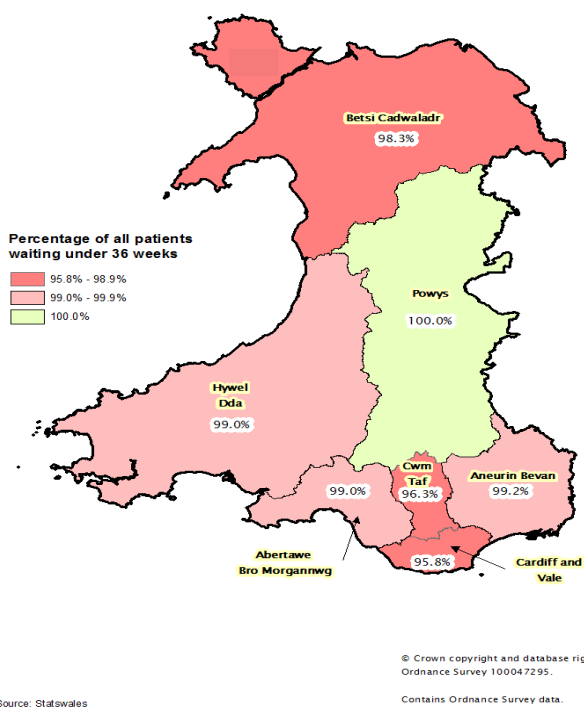
Notes:

- (a) This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the **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 April 2013.

**Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment at end of April 2013**



**Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of April 2013**



## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since April 2012

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since April 2012.<sup>6</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 April 2012 and April 2013.
- The percentages of patients waiting less than 26 weeks and 36 weeks for treatment in April 2013 were the lowest of any month during the last year

**Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, April 2012 to April 2013 (a),(b)**

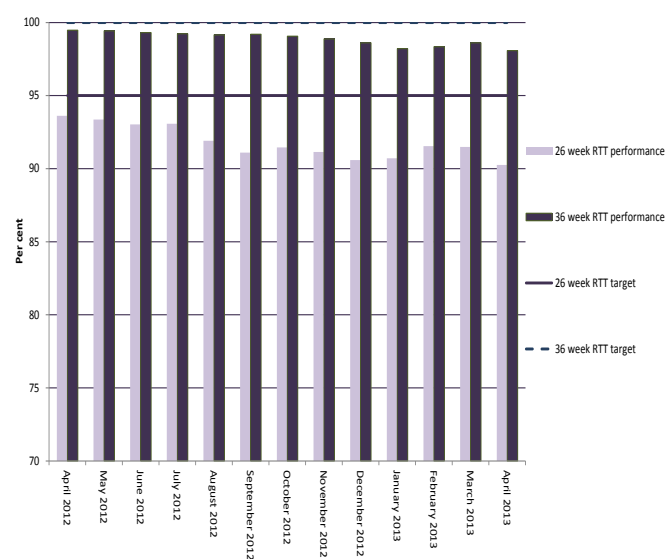
Date	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
April 2012	371,479	93.6	394,690	99.5	396,793
May 2012	371,996	93.4	396,192	99.4	398,469
June 2012	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
January 2013	347,156	90.7	375,840	98.2	382,690
February 2013	352,892	91.5	379,131	98.3	385,521
March 2013	356,678	91.5	384,457	98.6	389,871
April 2013	357,493	90.3	388,481	98.1	396,092

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.

**Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from April 2012 to April 2013**



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

Notes – See notes from Table 2.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales , **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks** [accessed 17 June 2013]

## 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>7</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 speciality decreased from almost 6,000 in June 2011 to 356 in March 2012.<sup>8</sup> The Welsh Government allocated an additional £15 million in 2012-13 to deal with the increased demand for orthopaedic treatment.<sup>9</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>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), *Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update*, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 17 June 2013]

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 17 June 2013]

<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2012-13: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 24, October 2011 [accessed 17 June 2013]

<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 17 June 2013]

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic speciality, at the end of April 2013.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic speciality at end of April 2013, (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	8,571	85.2	9,868	98.1	10,061
Aneurin Bevan	10,186	85.7	11,687	98.4	11,880
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,500	85.6	8,599	98.1	8,763
Cardiff and Vale	7,226	87.3	8,155	98.5	8,279
Cwm Taf	3,184	75.8	3,943	93.9	4,200
Hywel Dda	6,951	81.4	8,141	95.4	8,538
Powys	515	96.6	533	100.0	533
<b>Wales</b>	<b>44,133</b>	<b>84.5</b>	<b>50,926</b>	<b>97.5</b>	<b>52,254</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 April 2013 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

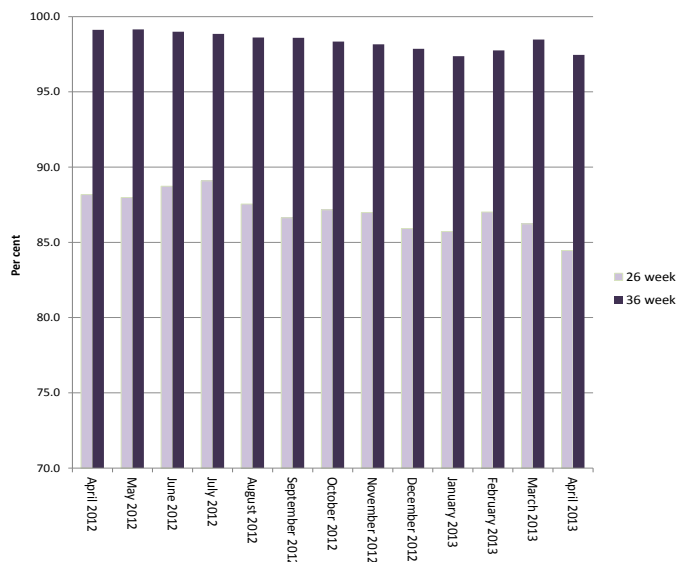
In April 2013, it can be seen that:

- In **Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks. In all other LHBs, less than 88 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.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under both 26 weeks and 36 weeks was **Cwm Taf Health Board**.

<sup>11</sup> Stats Wales **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting** [accessed 17 June 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 April 2012 to April 2013.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 4: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, from April 2012 to April 2013**



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

- For each month since April 2012, 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 April 2013 was the lowest at any point in the past year, and decreased by 1.7 percentage points compared to March 2013..
- For each month since April 2012, 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 April 2013 decreased by 1.0 percentage points compared to March 2013, and was lower than in all months over the past year except January 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, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – April 2013](#)
- 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.

View our [full range of publications](#) on the Assembly website: [assemblywales.org/research](http://assemblywales.org/research)

You can also follow us on Twitter: [@NAWRResearch](https://twitter.com/NAWRResearch)

We welcome your comments. These should be sent to: **Research Service, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff, CF99 1NA** or e-mailed to [Research.Service@wales.gov.uk](mailto:Research.Service@wales.gov.uk)

The Research Service has produced this Research Note for the benefit of Assembly Members and their support staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

**Enquiry no: 13/1556**