

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

October 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.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.**

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 14 October 2013]

² Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, August 2013](#), 10 October 2013 [accessed 14 October 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,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 than by LHB of residence, which are also published on Stats Wales.⁴

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in August 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 August 2013.⁵ It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- **In August 2013, neither the 26 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 August 2013. 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 both targets.

³ *ibid*

⁴ Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#) [accessed 14 October 2013]

⁵ Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, August 2013](#), 10 October 2013 [accessed 14 October 2013]

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

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	68,790	91.0	74,334	98.4	75,554
Aneurin Bevan	73,954	90.0	80,501	98.0	82,156
Betsi Cadwaladr	75,413	86.3	83,596	95.7	87,396
Cardiff and Vale	67,193	85.4	74,866	95.2	78,653
Cwm Taf	32,131	86.5	35,372	95.3	37,125
Hywel Dda	47,611	92.1	50,772	98.2	51,703
Powys	5,872	98.9	5,934	100.0	5,935
Wales	370,964	88.6	405,375	96.9	418,522

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 August 2013.
- (d) In Powys one patient was waiting more than 36 weeks to start treatment at the end of August 2013. The figure in table 1 is shown as 100.0 per cent due to rounding.

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

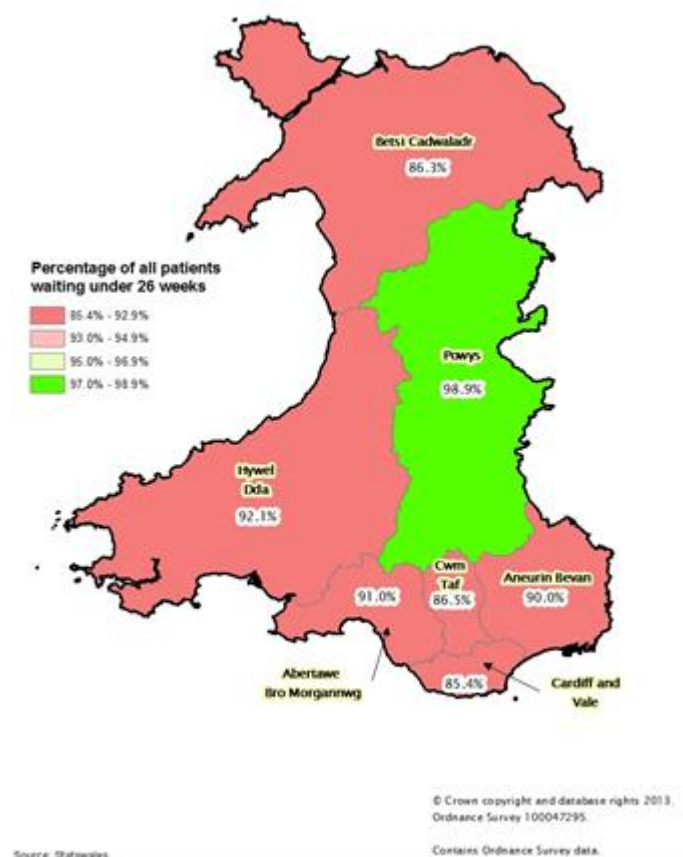
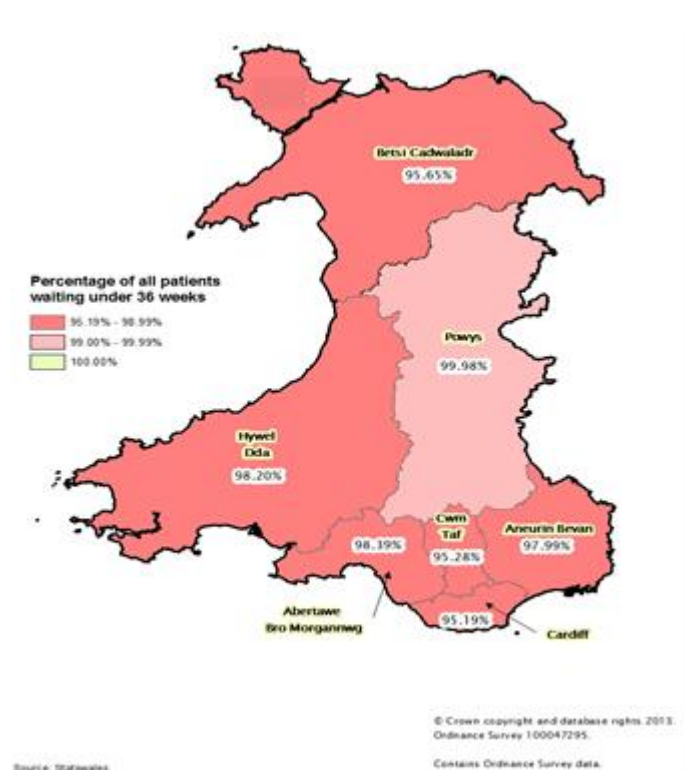


Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of August 2013



Performance against RTT waiting time targets since August 2012

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since August 2012.⁶

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 2012 and August 2013.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in August 2013 was 1.5 percentage points lower than in July 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in August 2013 was 0.4 percentage points lower than in July 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.
- The total number of patients waiting for treatment was the highest of any month over the past year.
- The total number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was the highest of any month over the past year.

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

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	
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
May 2013	362,209	89.3	396,802	97.8	405,735
June 2013	368,365	89.8	399,938	97.5	410,061
July 2013	375,192	90.1	405,389	97.3	416,498
August 2013	370,964	88.6	405,375	96.9	418,522

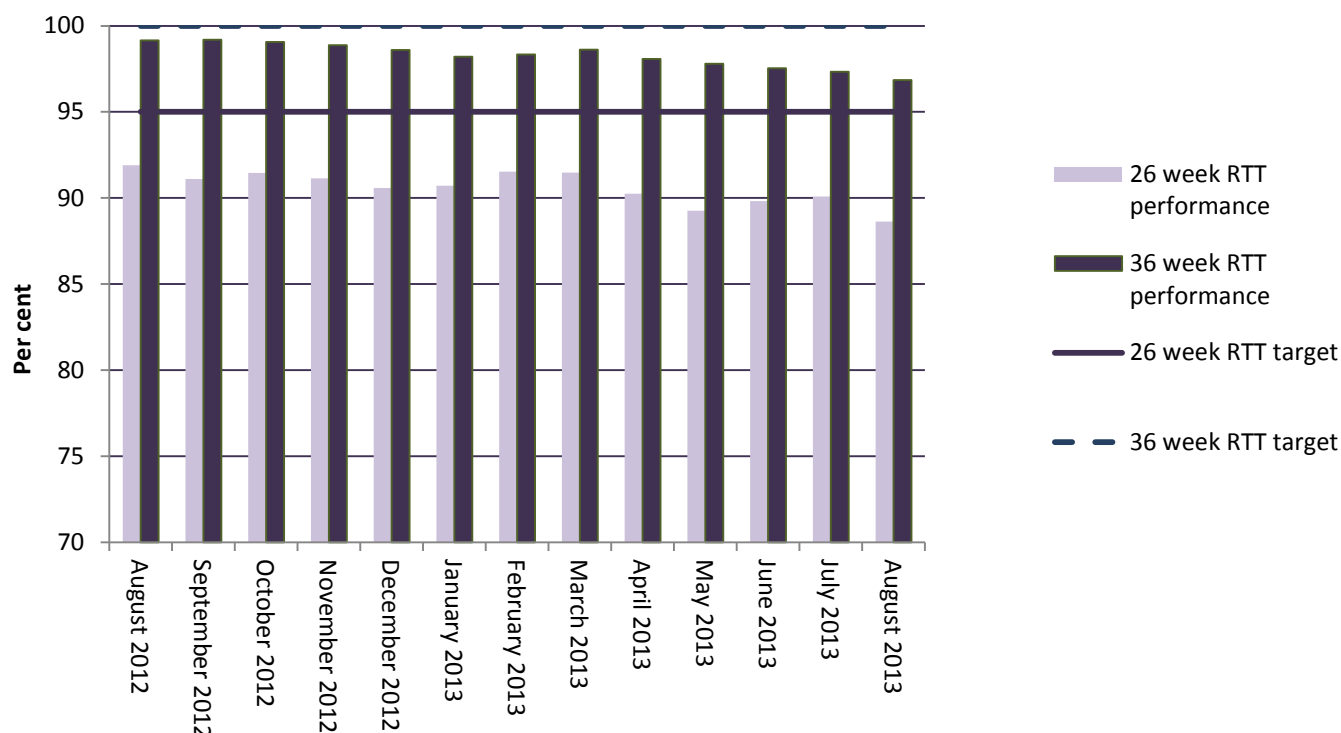
Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks**

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 May 2013.

⁶ Welsh Government, Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks** [accessed 14 October 2013]

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



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.⁷

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 2012.⁸

The Welsh Government allocated an additional £15 million in 2012-13 to deal with the increased demand for orthopaedic treatment.⁹ 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.¹⁰

⁷ Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), [Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update](#), Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 14 October 2013]

⁸ Welsh Government, [Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs](#), page 38, October 2012 [accessed 14 October 2013]

⁹ Welsh Government, [Draft Budget 2012-13: A Budget for Growth and Jobs](#), page 24, October 2011 [accessed 14 October 2013]

¹⁰ Welsh Government, [Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs](#), page 38, October 2012 [accessed 14 October 2013]

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of August 2013.

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of August 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	8,190	82.3	9,568	96.2	9,950
Aneurin Bevan	10,769	85.2	12,205	96.6	12,635
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,551	81.3	9,940	94.5	10,523
Cardiff and Vale	7,835	86.8	8,837	97.9	9,024
Cwm Taf	3,244	75.2	3,855	89.4	4,314
Hywel Dda	7,537	80.9	8,677	93.2	9,315
Powys	578	98.1	588	99.8	589
Wales	46,704	82.9	53,670	95.2	56,350

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

Notes:

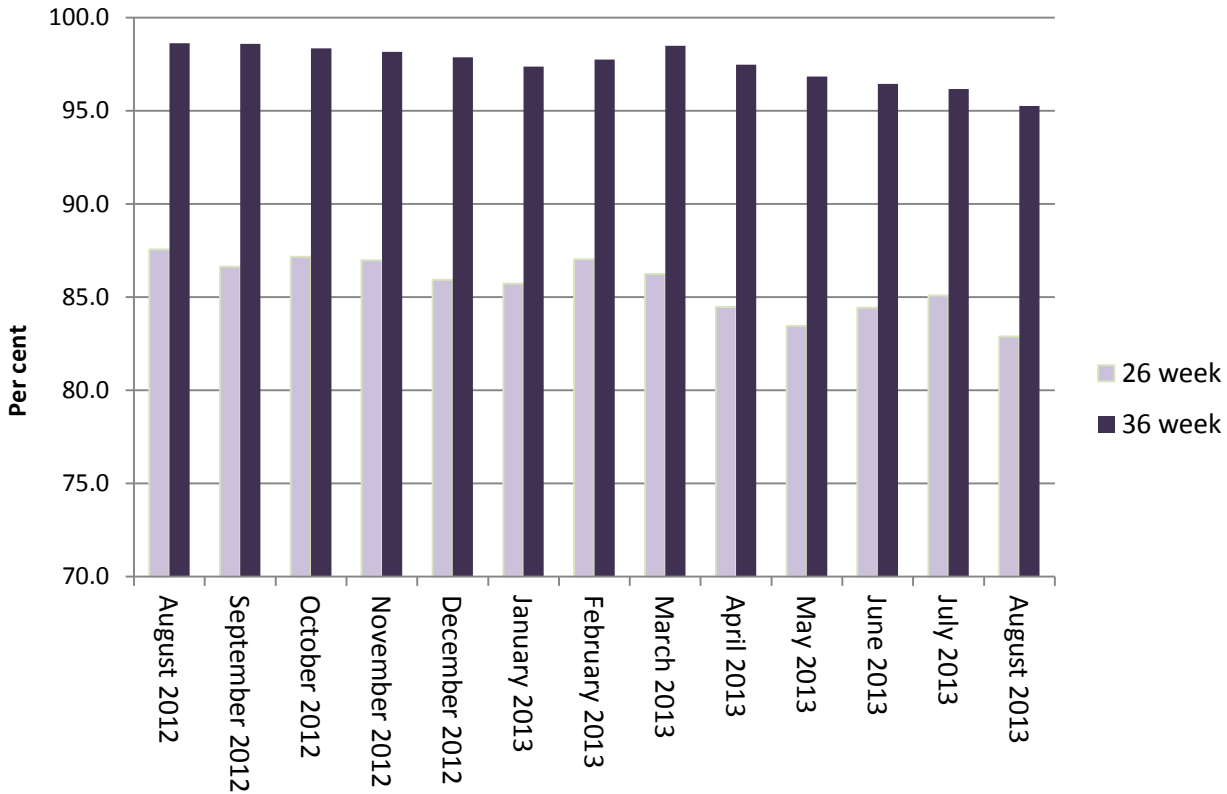
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in August 2013 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

In August 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 87 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment.
- **In Powys Teaching Health Board**, one patient had been waiting over 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 **Cwm Taf 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 2012 to August 2013.

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



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

■ For each month since August 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 August 2013 was 2.2 percentage points lower than July 2013, and was the lowest of any month over the past year.

■ For each month since August 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 August 2013 was the lowest of any point over the past year, and decreased by 1.0 percentage point compared to July 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, August 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), **Research Service**.

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