

NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

May 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 1, 14 June 2012 [accessed 13 May 2013]

² Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – March 2013](#), 9 May 2013 [accessed 13 May 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 March 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 March 2013.⁵ It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

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

³ Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – March 2013](#) 9 May 2013 [accessed 13 May 2013]

⁴ Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#) [accessed 13 May 2013]

⁵ Welsh Government, [NHS Wales Referral to Treatment Times – March 2013](#), 9 May 2013 [accessed 13 May 2013]

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

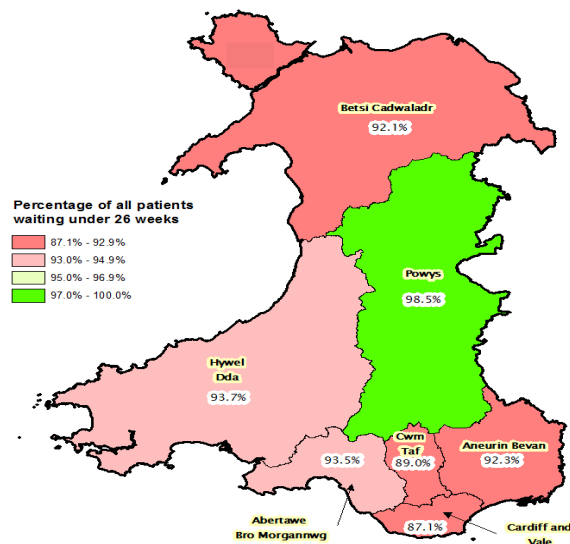
Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	66,051	93.5	70,285	99.5	70,663
Aneurin Bevan	72,295	92.3	77,889	99.4	78,320
Betsi Cadwaladr	75,980	92.1	81,499	98.8	82,457
Cardiff and Vale	62,146	87.1	68,893	96.5	71,390
Cwm Taf	30,187	89.0	33,105	97.6	33,929
Hywel Dda	44,360	93.7	47,041	99.3	47,367
Powys	5,659	98.5	5,745	100.0	5,745
Wales	356,678	91.5	384,457	98.6	389,871

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

Notes:

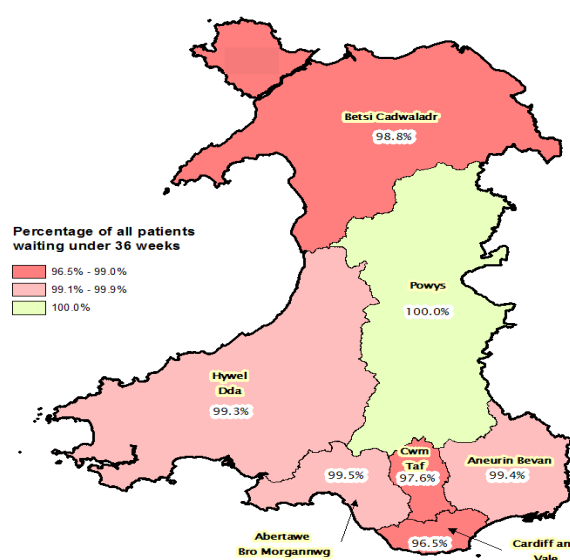
- (a) This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the **Welsh Government quality report** for further details.
- (b) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 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 March 2013.

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



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 March 2013



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

Performance against RTT waiting time targets since March 2012

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since March 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 March 2012 and March 2013.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in March 2013 was the same as February 2013.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks in March 2013 was 0.3 percentage points higher than that in February 2013. There has been an increase in the percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks in each of the last two months.

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

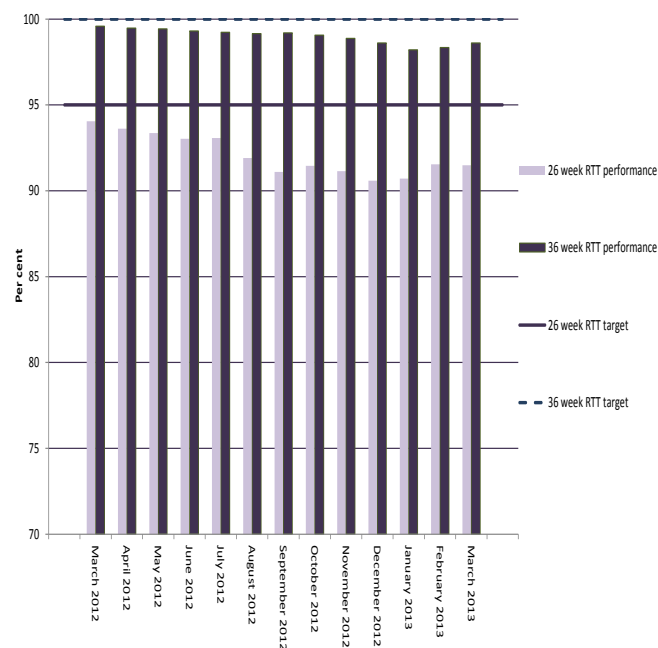
Date	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
March 2012	366,989	94.0	388,614	99.6	390,228
April 2012	371,479	93.6	394,690	99.5	396,793
May 2012	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
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

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 March 2012 to March 2013



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

Notes – See notes from Table 2.

⁶ Welsh Government, Stats Wales , **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks** [accessed 13 May 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.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 13 May 2013]

⁸ Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 13 May 2013]

⁹ Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2012-13: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 24, October 2011 [accessed 13 May 2013]

¹⁰ Welsh Government, *Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs*, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 13 May 2013]

Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic speciality, at the end of March 2013.¹¹

Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic speciality at end of March 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	8,640	87.9	9,727	98.9	9,833
Aneurin Bevan	10,337	86.8	11,826	99.3	11,907
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,429	88.6	8,337	99.4	8,387
Cardiff and Vale	7,187	87.0	8,144	98.6	8,261
Cwm Taf	3,204	80.9	3,857	97.4	3,958
Hywel Dda	6,945	82.3	8,116	96.1	8,442
Powys	458	97.0	472	100.0	472
Wales	44,200	86.2	50,479	98.5	51,260

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 2013 equal to or above that needed to achieve the general waiting time targets.

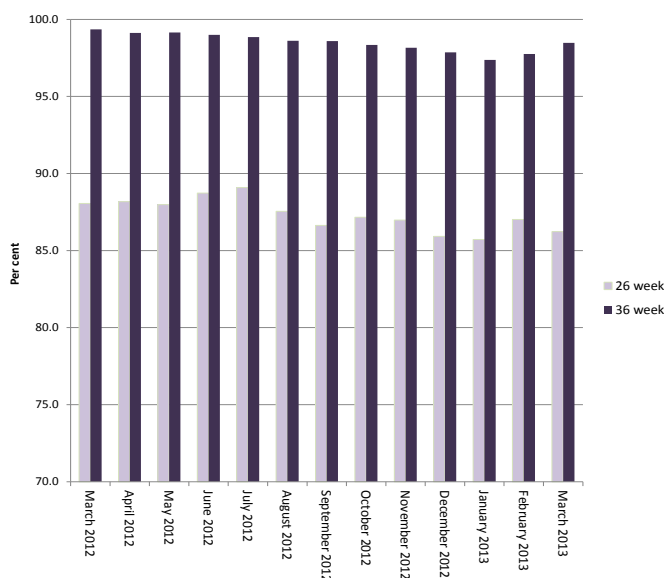
In March 2013, it can be seen that:

- In **Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks. In all other LHBs, less than 90 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 26 weeks was **Cwm Taf Local Health Board**, and under 36 weeks was **Hywel Dda Local Health Board**.

¹¹ Stats Wales **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting** [accessed 13 May 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 March 2012 to March 2013.¹²

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



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

- For each month since March 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 March 2013 decreased by 0.8 percentage points compared to February 2013.
- For each month since March 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 March 2013 increased by 0.8 percentage points compared to February 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 – March 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 Gareth Thomas (GarethDavid.Thomas@wales.gov.uk), Research Service.

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