

Diagnostic Waiting Times

Quarter Ending 31 December 2016

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Introduction

Waiting times are important to patients and are a measure of how the NHS is responding to demands for services. Measuring and regular reporting of waiting times highlight where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS Scotland's performance. Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland continues to be committed to improving the information on waiting times along with our key stakeholders, the NHS Boards and Scottish Government.

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Weeks Referral to Treatment standard (a maximum whole journey waiting time of 18 weeks from referral to treatment).

On 31 March 2009, the Scottish Government introduced the waiting time standard that patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations would be waiting no longer than six weeks. This supersedes nine weeks, which was initially introduced on 31 December 2007.

Waiting Times information on the following eight key diagnostic tests and investigations has been collected nationally since 2006:

Endoscopy

- Upper Endoscopy
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy)
- Colonoscopy
- Cystoscopy

Radiology

- CT Scan
- MRI Scan
- Barium Studies
- Non-obstetric ultrasound

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests and investigations at the end of the month. The standard end point that the wait is measured to, i.e. when the clock stops, is when the verified results are available for reporting. However, in some cases for both Endoscopic and Radiology tests, patients are reported as waiting until the day the test is carried out due to system constraints.

Main points

The Scottish Government waiting time standard states that patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations should be waiting no longer than six weeks.

As at 31 December 2016:

- 64,895 patients in NHSScotland were waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. This is a slight reduction from the number of patients waiting at 30 September 2016 and an increase of 24% since 31 December 2015.
- Table 1 shows that 86.1% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test had been waiting less than six weeks. This compares to 90.1% at 30 September 2016 and 93.2% at 31 December 2015.

Table 1: Waiting within 6 weeks Standard as at 31 December 2016 by NHS Board

NHS Health Board	Waiting within 6 week Standard (%)
NHS SCOTLAND	86.1
NHS Ayrshire & Arran	65.4
NHS Borders	99.0
NHS Dumfries & Galloway	97.9
NHS Fife	90.8
NHS Forth Valley	99.3
NHS Golden Jubilee National Hospital	100.0
NHS Grampian	86.2
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	87.3
NHS Highland	85.5
NHS Lanarkshire	100.0
NHS Lothian	75.8
NHS Orkney	100.0
NHS Shetland	100.0
NHS Tayside	93.2
NHS Western Isles	87.0

Results and Commentary

The Scottish Government national waiting time standard is for patients to be waiting no more than six weeks for any of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. NHS Boards are currently working to local targets that patients will wait no more than four weeks.

Eight Key Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

- Table 2 shows the number of [patients waiting](#) for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. At 31 December 2016, 86.1% had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of 6 weeks in NHSScotland. This compares to 90.1% at 30 September 2016 and 93.2% at 31 December 2015. A detailed breakdown of diagnostic tests by NHS Board of Treatment is provided [here](#).
- 73.1% of patients waiting for endoscopy tests had waits of less than six weeks.
- 91.8% of patients waiting for radiology tests had waits of less than six weeks.

Table 2: Patients waiting for all Key Diagnostic Tests, NHSScotland

Diagnostic Test & Investigations	Number of Patients Waiting as at 31 Dec 16:			Waiting within 6 week Standard (%):		
	Total waiting	> 6 Weeks	> 4 Weeks	31 Dec 16 (current)	30 Sep 16	31 Dec 15
8 Key Diagnostic Tests	64 895	9 027	16 848	86.1	90.1	93.2
Upper Endoscopy	7 196	1 859	2 780	74.2	76.6	80.1
Lower Endoscopy	1 971	570	845	71.1	70.2	79.7
Colonoscopy	8 025	2 205	3 264	72.5	78.9	79.5
Cystoscopy	2 596	690	1 101	73.4	86.5	90.8
All Endoscopy	19 788	5 324	7 990	73.1	78.1	81.0
Computer Tomography (CT Scan)	10 739	343	1 523	96.8	98.2	98.8
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI Scan)	13 323	977	3 029	92.7	95.2	95.6
Barium Studies	122	0	3	100.0	98.1	100.0
Non-Obstetric Ultrasound	20 923	2 383	4 303	88.6	93.7	99.4
All Radiology	45 107	3 703	8 858	91.8	95.2	98.3

Note:

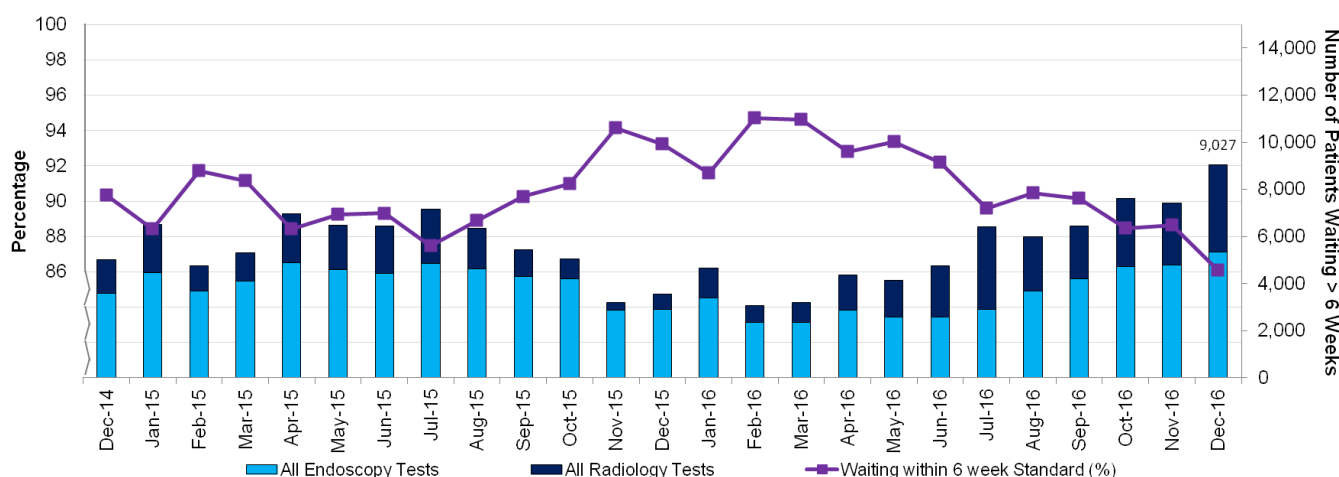
ISD receives aggregate diagnostics data from each NHS Board and so patient-level information is not systematically validated by ISD, however ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is the responsibility of the Board.

Chart 1 shows an increasing trend in the number of patients waiting longer than six weeks for most of 2016, going from a high of 94.7% of patients waiting within the six weeks standard at month ending 29 February 2016 before steadily falling to 86.1% at 31 December 2016.

The number of patients waiting over six weeks for all endoscopy tests was between 4,000 and 5,000 for much of 2015, before falling to a two year low of 2,355 at 31 March 2016. This figure has doubled over the past six months, rising from 2,563 at 30 June 2016 before increasing month on month to 5,324 at 31 December 2016.

There has been an increasing trend in the number of patients waiting over six weeks for all radiology tests for more than a year. At 30 November 2015 there were 329 patients waiting more than six weeks which has risen to 3,703 at 31 December 2016. The recent increase is largely due to the number of patients waiting over six weeks for a non-obstetric ultrasound, with MRI and CT scans also showing an increase in longer waits for the latest available month.

Chart 1: Waiting within 6 week Standard (%)



Note:
The vertical scale on the left hand side of the graph does not start at 0, therefore please adjust interpretation accordingly.

ISD receives aggregate diagnostics data from each NHS Board and so patient-level information is not systematically validated by ISD, however ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is the responsibility of the Board.

Glossary

Diagnostic test: Test or procedure that is used to identify a person's condition, disease or injury to enable a medical diagnosis to be made.

Key Diagnostic test: There are eight key diagnostic tests, for which the current National Waiting Times Standard is a maximum wait of six weeks. These eight tests/investigations are:

- Upper Endoscopy,
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy),
- Colonoscopy,
- Cystoscopy,
- Computer Tomography (CT),
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI),
- Barium Studies,
- Non-obstetric Ultrasound.

Patient's completed wait: The period of time between the date the request for the test or procedure is received within the department and the date when the verified report has been received by or made available to the requester.

Patients waiting: Number of available patients waiting at the census date, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester. The number of patients waiting at the census date in each time band corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the receipt of the referral.

List of Tables

Table No.	Name	Time period	File & size
1	Waiting times for diagnostic tests monthly census dates	31 December 2014 to 31 December 2016	Excel [550KB]

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Further Information

Further information can be found on the [ISD website](#)

NHS Performs

A selection of information from this publication is included in [NHS Performs](#). NHS Performs is a website that brings together a range of information on how hospitals and NHS Boards within NHSScotland are performing.

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Appendices

A1 – Background Information

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Week Referral To Treatment standard (18 Weeks RTT) with waiting times information on the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations having been collected nationally since 2006.

The Scottish Government introduced a nine week maximum waiting time for these eight key diagnostic tests and investigations from 31 December 2007. This wait was reduced to six weeks from 31 March 2009.

NHS Boards also supply data that allows measurement of the number of patients waiting over four weeks. The number of patients waiting over four weeks is included from 31 March 2010. From January 2010, the Scotland total includes Golden Jubilee National Hospital.

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests and investigations at the end of the month, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester. This includes all referral routes (i.e. whether the patient was referred by a GP, by a hospital-based clinician or other route) and also all settings (i.e. outpatient clinic, inpatient ward, x-ray department, primary care one-stop centers etc.).

The diagnostics waiting times national delivery team has worked with NHS Boards and ISD over recent years to support the compilation of the diagnostic waiting time data. Common definitions have been established and reporting systems improved so the coverage and quality of these data has improved month-on-month from April 2006.

ISD receives aggregate diagnostics data from each NHS Board and so patient-level information is not systematically validated by ISD, however, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is carried out by individual NHS Boards in collaboration with ISD.

A2 – Background Information

ISD receives aggregate data on Diagnostic Waiting Times from each NHS Board where the data for the previous quarter is confirmed by the submitting Board. Although aggregated data cannot be systematically validated by ISD, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. Reported data are compared to previous figures and to expected trends. Derivation of the figures and data accuracy is a matter for individual NHS Boards.

Specific NHS Board Data Quality Issues:

NHS Highland

Normal process for running the data is to run the report in the middle of the following month as at the previous month end. This enables the service to tidy up any outstanding waiting list queries to reflect the most accurate position. Due to the implementation of NHS Highland's new Patient Management System, they are now unable to follow the normal process. This means that the data submitted for Month Ends 31 March 2014 onwards are at the Month end position and no tidying up exercise has been applied to the data.

However NHS Highland are confident that this is an accurate reflection of their data and have signed off accordingly. ISD continue to quality assure the data and query any outliers with NHS Highland.

From July 2016, NHS Highland changed the reporting methodology for Radiology exams to fall in line with the ISD methodology of reporting from Date Referral Received to Date Exam Verified, we had previously been reporting from Date Referral Received to Exam done date. This caused an increase in numbers reported from the July 2016 submission onwards. Argyll & Bute cleared a backlog of Barium Studies Exams in August 2016 which meant the number reported in July was cleared by the August submission.

NHS Grampian

In July 2013, NHS Grampian made improvements to their local reporting processes for Diagnostic Waiting Times. Consequent to this, there has been a rise in the number of patients waiting for a Diagnostic Test and investigation. ISD have received assurance from NHS Grampian that historical data is correct and that there are no data quality issues however caution should be taken when comparing data prior to July 2013 due to the change in their reporting practices.

Following recent discussions with Scottish Government in relation to Guidance for Colorectal screening and Flexible sigmoidoscopy projects, screening patients included from March 2015 onwards.

NHS Tayside

Patients who have been offered a date out with NHS Tayside's local 4 week target but within the six week national target and whose appointment is subsequently moved, for example the patient is on holiday, NHS Tayside's PAS system will not allow unavailability to be applied as it works to a 4 week target.

NHS Western Isles

NHS Western Isles are unable to provide true waiting list size, for Radiology diagnostic tests, as direct access to their RIS is not available. As a proxy, NHS Western Isles compile figures for Diagnostics from SCI Store on 15th of the month post census date. This has been the process since October 2011.

A2 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details)

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication title	Diagnostic Waiting Times
Description	Monthly summary of patients waiting times for eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.
Theme	Health and Social Care
Topic	Access and Waiting Times
Format	Excel workbooks
Data source(s)	Aggregate counts accredited and derived from individual NHSScotland Boards are submitted monthly to ISD using a defined Excel template. Associated with individual NHSScotland Boards Local Delivery Plans integrated to the 18Weeks RTT national standards.
Date that data are acquired	Deadline for data submission is the 22nd of each month, though files can be resubmitted up to one week before publication where the quality assurance process identifies differences with local figures.
Release date	The last Tuesday of the month for each publication.
Frequency	Quarterly
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Data from December 2007 to date. There have been no delays in reporting.
Continuity of data	From January 2010 Golden Jubilee National Hospital data is included in the Scotland total.
Revisions statement	Historic data is not normally revised unless revision of data is required due to NHS Board resubmission of revised local data following publication.
Revisions relevant to this publication	Previous publications have included endoscopy patients that were seen at Golden Jubilee National Hospital. These patients were also reported by the referring health board responsible for the patient's wait. These have been removed from this publication to remove double counting. This has lowered the NHS Scotland figures from previous publications, and removed the reporting of endoscopy for Golden Jubilee National Hospital.
Concepts and definitions	A Data Submission Guidance document is available in printed and electronic form. These have been provided to all NHS Boards' key DMMI contacts. This information is now published and available to view at http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/
Relevance and key uses of the statistics	<p>Waiting times are important to patients and are a measure of how the NHS is responding to demands for services. Measuring and regular reporting of waiting times highlights where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS performance throughout the country. The NHS in Scotland has been set a number of targets for maximum waiting times.</p> <p>Other uses of the data include information requests for a variety of customers, e.g. research charities; public companies; freedom of Information requests; information support to Boards; health intelligence</p>

	work; parliamentary questions and HEAT targets.
Accuracy	ISD only receives aggregate data from each NHS Board where the data for the previous quarter is confirmed by the submitting Board. Although aggregated data can not be systematically validated by ISD, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. Reported data are compared to previous figures and to expected trends. Derivation of the figures and data accuracy is a matter for individual NHS Boards.
Completeness	100% of submitted data is used for analysis and publication.
Comparability	Comparative waiting times information is not possible at present using these data due to inconsistencies in definitions of waiting times for treatment across the four countries.
Accessibility	It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines .
Coherence and clarity	Key statistics for the latest quarter are linked to on the main Waiting Times page of the publication. Statistics are presented within Excel spreadsheets. NHS Board and national figures are presented. Geographical hierarchies and national figures are presented using drop down menus. Further features to aid clarity: 1. Tables use drop down menus to display data by a single Board. 2. Tables are printer friendly.
Value type and unit of measurement	Count of number of patients waiting over four, six and nine weeks for Scotland and NHSScotland Health Boards
Disclosure	The ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol is followed.
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published 29 th July 2010. http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf
Last published	29 November 2016
Next published	30 May 2017
Date of first publication	May 2009
Help email	NSS.isdwaitingtimes@nhs.net
Date form completed	10 February 2017

A3 – Early Access details (including Pre-Release Access)

Pre-Release Access

Under terms of the "Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008", ISD are obliged to publish information on those receiving Pre-Release Access ("Pre-Release Access" refers to statistics in their final form prior to publication). The standard maximum Pre-Release Access is five working days. Shown below are details of those receiving standard Pre-Release Access.

Standard Pre-Release Access:

- Scottish Government Health Department
- NHS Board Chief Executives
- NHS Board Communication leads

A4 – ISD and Official Statistics

About ISD

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

Purpose: To deliver effective national and specialist intelligence services to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland.

Mission: Better Information, Better Decisions, Better Health

Vision: To be a valued partner in improving health and wellbeing in Scotland by providing a world class intelligence service.

Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

ISD's statistical publications are currently classified as one of the following:

- National Statistics (ie assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as complying with the Code of Practice)
- National Statistics (ie legacy, still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- Official Statistics (ie still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- other (not Official Statistics)

Further information on ISD's statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the [ISD website](#).

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.