‘New Ways’ of Defining and Measuring Waiting Times

New Ways was a new approach for managing patients’ waiting times designed to make the management, measurement and monitoring of waiting time clear and transparent. New Ways was intended to make patient waiting time fair for all by:

- setting out fair procedures for patients who do not or cannot attend, cancel or refuse a reasonable offer of an appointment
- making explicit the shared responsibility of patients, GPs and hospital services
- ensuring medically or socially unavailable patients did not lose their guarantee of a maximum waiting time.

Adjusting for periods of unavailability

- Any periods of unavailability should be recorded.
- Patients should be made aware of what effect unavailability has on their waiting time.
- Further work will be carried out to explore the applicability of this to mental health.

Resetting the clock with non-attendance

- Patients who having accepted a ‘reasonable offer’ of appointment and then cannot attend (CWA) or do not attend (DNA) have their waiting time adjusted following non-attendance.
- The waiting time is reset to zero on the date the appointment is cancelled or the date the patient DNA. Patients should be made aware of what effect non-attendance has on their waiting time.
- Further work will be carried out to explore the applicability of this to mental health.

Psychological Therapies Waiting Times

‘Deliver faster access to mental health services by delivering 18 weeks referral to treatment for Psychological therapies from December 2014’

The waiting time is measured between the date referral received and the date psychological therapy commences as planned.

As a balancing measure the waiting time is also measured between:

1. Date referral received and START of initial assessment for suitability for psychological therapy (incorporating ICP 15)
2. START of initial assessment for suitability for psychological therapy (incorporating ICP 15) and the date psychological therapy commences as planned.

Definitions for Key Measurement Points

DATE REFERREll RECEIVED
A referral is a request to a care professional, team, service or organisation to provide appropriate care to a patient/client. A referral may be made by a person, team, service or organisation on behalf of a patient/client, or a patient/client may refer him/herself. The clock starts on the date of receipt of referral.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT FOR SUITABILITY FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPY
The assessment for suitability may be carried out:

- as part of a generic mental health assessment
- as part of a specialist psychological assessment
- during a care plan review

It must incorporate ICP 15—The need for structured psychological and/or psychosocial intervention for the service user is assessed. The assessment for suitability may result in a provisional formulation and action plan for what to do next.

TREATMENT COMMENCES (START OF PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPY)
It has been suggested that treatment commences when ‘initial formulation is complete, a collaborative treatment plan is in place and the psychological therapy commences as planned’. This may include the following steps:

- Complaint(s)/Problem(s) have been identified
- The decision about the suitability for psychological therapy has been made
- Boundaries have been established
- There has been formulation of a treatment plan
- There is collaborative agreement with the patient on the next steps
- Goals and Reviews are set
- Evidence based therapy starts to be delivered by a suitably qualified/trained practitioner
- When the patient knows ‘something is being done’