Stage of Treatment Waiting Times: General Data Quality issues

NHS Board-specific data quality issues

ISD and NHS Boards work closely to ensure that published Waiting Times information accurately reflects locally held data. During 2013 and 2014, all NHS Boards gradually moved to a new Treatment Time Guarantee (TTG) compliant extract. This change, compounded by a limited period of time to test new extracts with redeveloped ISD warehouse, led to new data quality issues that were subject to further investigation. The following list provides an overview of historical and current data quality issues:

NHS Ayrshire & Arran
The following records have been inappropriately included in New Outpatient reporting: New Infertility (from April 2014); New Technician Led Clinical Physiology (from February 2017). NHS Ayrshire & Arran are in the process of making the necessary amendments to ensure they are appropriately excluded to reflect the guidance.

NHS Borders
For quarter ending 31 December 2014, NHS Borders previously reported a greater number of Inpatient and Day case waits over 12 weeks than submitted to ISD. This was consequent to a recently diagnosed technical difficulty that was a by-product of a change to local Patient Administration System. The issues relate to an incorrectly configured field ‘date added to waiting list’. NHS Borders have confirmed that this issue has been resolved; however this has resulted in variation between published figures and local reporting for quarters ending 31st Dec 2014 and 31st Mar 2015.

NHS Borders report that from 2017 onwards, a number of Haematology and Medical Oncology Inpatients and Day cases were erroneously added to the True Waiting List rather than the Repeat Waiting List. This averages at around 4 patients seen per quarter.

NHS Borders report some Repeat Waiting List patients are being included in the publication which should be excluded and therefore some of their figures may be slightly inflated.

NHS Dumfries & Galloway
NHS Dumfries & Galloway report that referrals for cataracts from 31st Jan 2016 are now included in the Waiting Times data warehouse (appointments to a nurse-led cataract clinic were not sent in the extract prior to this).

NHS Fife
NHS Fife moved to a new PAS (TrakCare) in April 2017. The number of Inpatients and Day cases reported as seen by NHS Fife following the implementation of TrakCare has been higher than expected due the erroneous inclusion of planned repeat Inpatients and Day cases. A filter has been applied to ensure that these figures are brought more into line with those from local data reported directly to Scottish Government on a monthly basis.

Prior to August 2014, NHS Fife data in the ISD warehouse is recorded under old unavailability codes.
The number of patients removed from the waiting list for “Other” reasons has risen from April 2017 due to a change in recording processes following extensive retraining of users after moving to a new PAS.

NHS Fife report an issue where non-consultant led Orthoptics patients are being recorded as consultant led and are therefore being included within the publication. NHS Fife are in touch with their PAS supplier to find a fix. This averages as less than 30 patients per quarter.

NHS Fife report an issue where a small number of removals are not being included in their extract. NHS Fife are working with their PAS supplier to resolve the issue.

**NHS Forth Valley**

NHS Forth Valley experienced technical problems with data submitted to the ISD Waiting Times warehouse after changing their PAS supplier in April 2019. Locally derived figures have been supplied for this indicator for quarter ending June 2019 and data from the previous publication has been used for quarter ending March 2019.

The number of patients Transferred out of Board has risen in NHS Forth Valley due to a recording change implemented in October 2013. The new method of recording is in line with ISD guidance which aims to prevent double counting of hospital activity and ensures that SMR is submitted by the board of treatment. Previously NHS Forth Valley patients, who chose to accept an offer of treatment at Golden Jubilee National Hospital, were booked into a virtual clinic in NHS Forth Valley. Once seen they were removed locally. However, with the changes to the Golden Jubilee IT management Information reporting systems, NHS Forth Valley now record these patient differently and they are recorded as 'Seen at Golden Jubilee', which results in recording the patient as transferred out of Health Board.

**NHS Grampian**

NHS Grampian has stated that if there is a mismatch between the waiting list specialty and the proposed procedure specialty, an incorrect waiting time standard can be allocated. This has the effect of overstating the TTG activity and 12 week breachers in the warehouse.

During early 2011, NHS Grampian moved to a new Patient Management System, whose implementation led to some subsequent incompleteness in the records returned to the Waiting Times data warehouse at ISD. As a result, the number of patients reported as being seen or waiting and the number of patients added and removed from the waiting list for quarter ending 31 March and 30 September 2011 is expected to be lower than the true figure.

NHS Grampian have identified an issue with New Outpatients removed from the list due to being referred back to their GP.

**NHS Highland**

NHS Highland reports a correction to over-recording the number of Inpatient and Day Cases. Orthopaedic injections (prior to December 2015), non-GA scopes (prior to March 2016), Home sleep studies (prior to April 2016), endoscopy tests (prior to May 2016) and planned
repeat appointments for Pain Management (prior to October 2015) had been included in this cohort.

NHS Highland report that prior to the implementation of their new Patient Management System, the historical waiting time extract sent to the Waiting Times data warehouse did not accurately reflect the local position for the number of patients on list. This resulted in a small proportion of patients being included in key outpatient figures for activity not covered by the national waiting time standard.

NHS Lanarkshire
In December 2013, NHS Lanarkshire reviewed the use of medical unavailability for Inpatient and Day case patients from 1 October 2012 and identified an issue in the process. Actions have since been taken to address this which resulted in a subsequent decrease in Medical unavailability and an increase in Patient advised unavailability from January 2014 onwards.

In February 2019, NHS Lanarkshire identified an issue where non-consultant led activity for Geriatric Medicine, Rheumatology and Cardiology is currently being included within the publication. This is due to care provider codes being blank and is currently being addressed locally.

NHS Lanarkshire have identified an issue where patients have been recorded against the wrong removal reason. This has resulted in the number of patients recorded as 'Treatment no longer required' to be over inflated from January 2018.

NHS Lothian
In October 2014, NHS Lothian reviewed the use of unavailability in dermatology outpatients and found an issue in the patient focussed booking process. This had led to incorrect availability status and waiting time being reported in the earlier part of the year. Immediate actions have been taken to resolve this. The application of this unavailability is estimated to have caused the understatement of the number of outpatients over 12 weeks in the publication at the end of May from around 15 rising to approximately 50 in September. During this period, the unavailability at each month end is estimated to be overstated by an average of circa 80. A similar, smaller instance was subsequently identified to have taken place in the summer of 2013.

Some historical figures for NHS Lothian which relate to levels of attainment of the waiting times standard and levels of patient unavailability are now known to be inaccurate. Further information can be found in the pwc report. This affects all tables showing waiting time performance and tables showing patient unavailability.

NHS Lothian have identified issues with outpatient data submitted to ISD from Edinburgh Dental Institute. A combination of system and user issues has resulted in an understatement of the number of patients waiting and incorrect reporting of lengths of wait. Given these concerns records received from the Institute have been excluded from this publication. Local data sources indicate that, in July 2019, approximately 4,800 patients were waiting under the General Outpatient Standard, 1,900 of which were over 12 weeks.
NHS Lothian are working with ISD to re-establish the inclusion of Dental Institute data in future publications.

**NHS Orkney**
NHS Orkney moved to a new Patient Management System (PMS) in June 2014. Subsequent to the change, some additions to the list were migrated to the new system in error. This has resulted in a higher than normal number of removals coded as 'inappropriate additions'.

**NHS Shetland**
NHS Shetland reported an issue with the orthodontic service, resulting in an increase in number of new outpatients who waited over 12 weeks for quarter ending 30 September 2013. These patients had been recorded locally in the dental management system but had not been recorded in the hospital patient administration system. As a result, NHS Shetland had not identified that this cohort of patients had not been treated within 12 weeks. The orthodontic service is now covered by the hospital system to ensure compliance with waiting time standard.

**NHS Tayside**
NHS Tayside experienced significant data challenges following the implementation of TrakCare in June 2017. NHS Tayside has supplied local data for both Inpatient/Day cases and New Outpatient waiting times until June 2018 for IPDC and December 2018 for NOP. Both IPDC and NOP are now being reported from the National Data Warehouse, however, for NOP in particular there are some outstanding issues. The principle issue is that the Data Warehouse is displaying patient waiting times for patients who do not fall under the 12 week standard (including Diagnostic patients and Cancer patients). This amounts to over 10% of NHS Tayside’s Outpatient records. NHS Tayside acknowledges that ISD are working to resolve this issue.

Due to a local system issue, figures for NHS Tayside have historically been inflated. This issue relates to NHS Tayside’s former PAS (Patient Administration System), TOPAS. Due to many AHP (Allied Healthcare Professional) and Nurse-led clinics not having a GMC (General Medical Council) number, many clinics are being recorded as consultant-led rather than AHP or Nurse-led.

There is a noticeable decrease in New Outpatient completed waits between the quarter ending June 2017 and the quarter ending September 2017 onwards. This reduction coincides with the introduction of TrakCare. NHS Tayside are reviewing the new clinic set up and subsequent outcome and attendance recording to ensure all appointments are captured appropriately within the reporting.

In February 2019, NHS Tayside identified an issue where removals reasons of 'Inappropriate addition to list', 'Duplicate referral' and 'Already appointed' are being counted under 'Other' removal reason in between July 2018 and December 2018 causing the 'Other' removal reason figure to be inflated for those quarters. NHS Tayside are currently investigating this issue.