Defining and Measuring Waiting Times

Within the context of Mental Health services, NHS Boards have the option to make clock adjustments in line with NHSScotland Waiting Times Guidance. However these adjustments should be for reporting purposes only and should not determine clinical decisions on the timing of any offers of appointments to patients.

Adjusting for Periods of Unavaillability
- Any periods of unavailability should be recorded.
- Unavailability and refusal of a reasonable offer rarely impacts on mental health waiting times, therefore NHS Boards may choose not to apply adjustments but may apply them if cost effective to do so. However these adjustments should be for reporting purposes only and should not determine clinical decisions on the timing of any offers of appointments to patients.

Resetting the Clock with Non-attendance
- Patients who having accepted a ‘reasonable offer’ of an appointment and then cannot attend (CNA) 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.

It has been recommended that NHS Boards put systems in place for resetting the clock for DNA/CNA. However these adjustments should be for reporting purposes only and should not determine clinical decisions on the timing of any offers of appointments to patients.

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 ICP15)
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 REFERRAL 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/her self. 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 ICP15 – 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

And will be when a psychological therapy starts to be delivered by a suitably qualified/trained practitioner.