

Publication Report



Diagnostic Waiting Times

Quarter ending 31 December 2011

Publication date – 28 February 2012



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Introduction

In 2007, the Cabinet Secretary of Health and Wellbeing stated that "A whole journey waiting time target of 18 weeks from general practitioner referral to treatment" be delivered "by December 2011". Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of this 18 Weeks Referral To Treatment target (18 Weeks RTT).

Waiting Time 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

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 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.

Key points

At 31 December 2011:

- Approximately 41 000 patients were waiting for one of eight key diagnostic tests in NHS Scotland.
- 97.2% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test were waiting no longer than six weeks.

Results and Commentary

From 31 March 2009, The Scottish Government has set a national waiting time standard that patients will wait no more than six weeks for any of the eight key diagnostic tests. NHS Boards are currently working to local targets that patients will wait no more than four weeks.

[Table 1](#) shows the number of patients recorded as waiting at selected month ends for the eight key diagnostic tests. The percentage of patients waiting over 6 weeks at 31 December 2011 is 2.8%. When compared with the percentage of patients waiting at the same time in the previous year (6.4%), there has been an overall improvement in waiting times for the key diagnostic tests.

Table 1: Patients waiting for all key diagnostic tests, NHS Scotland

Month end	Total patients waiting	Waiting over 4 weeks (%)	Waiting over 6 weeks (%)
31 December 2011	40 819	7.2	2.8
30 November 2011	41 719	4.3	0.8
31 October 2011	39 787	4.0	0.9
31 December 2010	36 823	8.9	6.4

[Table 2](#) shows the number of patients waiting by diagnostic test at 31 December 2011.

For the key endoscopy tests, a total of 533 patients throughout NHS Scotland were recorded as having been waiting longer than six weeks. The majority of these patients were recorded within NHS Ayrshire and Arran. NHS Ayrshire & Arran report that these figures are inflated due to staff resourcing and recording issues, which are both being addressed.

The majority of the patients waiting over 6 weeks for an MRI scan or ultrasound were within NHS Fife. NHS Fife has since increased their capacity to carry out these radiology tests.

Very few patients were waiting beyond six weeks for Lower Endoscopy, Cystoscopy, CT scans and Barium studies.

Table 2: Patients waiting for each key diagnostic test, NHS Scotland

Diagnostic Test	Total patients waiting at 31 Dec 2011	Waiting over 4 weeks	Waiting over 6 weeks
Upper Endoscopy	4 277	613	372
Lower Endoscopy (excl. colonoscopy)	1 739	171	18
Colonoscopy	4 853	462	125
Cystoscopy	1 533	213	18
All Endoscopy	12 402	1 459	533
Computer Tomography (CT)	6 530	21	5
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)	7 358	546	160
Barium Studies	483	0	0
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	14 046	901	428
All Radiology	28 417	1 468	593
All Key Diagnostics	40 819	2 927	1 126

[Chart 1](#) and [Chart 2](#) display the trend over time, of number of patients waiting over four and six weeks, for all key endoscopes and all key radiology tests, respectively.

The sharp increase for patients waiting over four and six weeks for endoscopic tests from September 2010 to December 2010 (Chart 1) was due to high demand experienced within NHS Lothian. This issue has now been resolved.

Considerable reductions in diagnostic waiting times took place when the revised standard of 6 weeks was first introduced at the end of March 2009. The fluctuations in waiting times, which can be seen in the last two years, are mainly due to recording and performance issues within individual NHS Boards.

Chart 1: Key Endoscopy tests. Patients waiting over six and four weeks, NHS Scotland

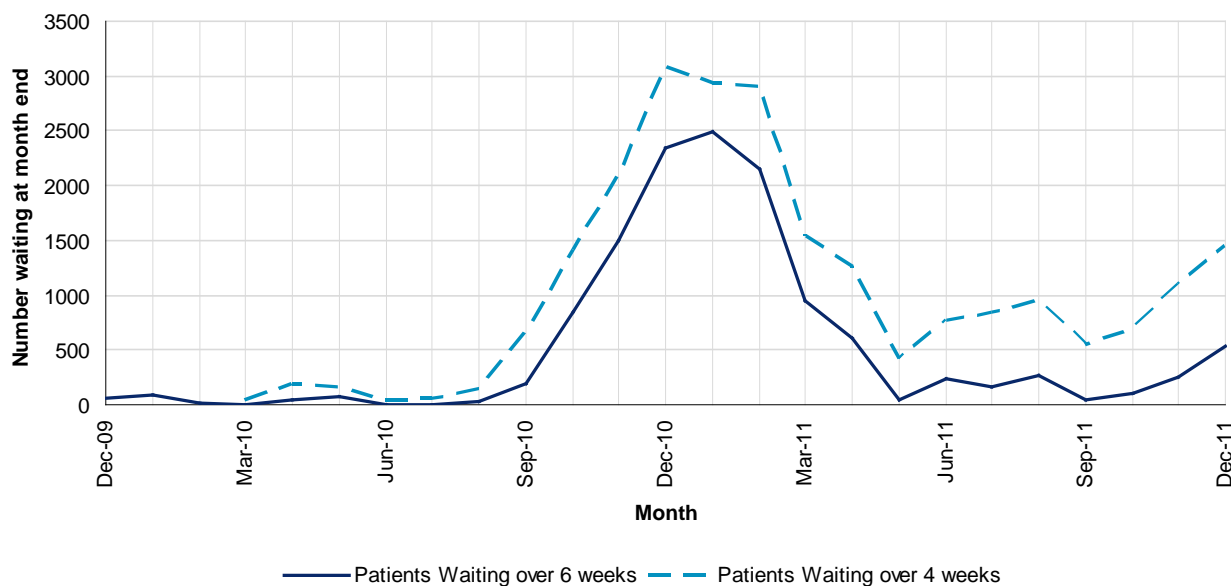
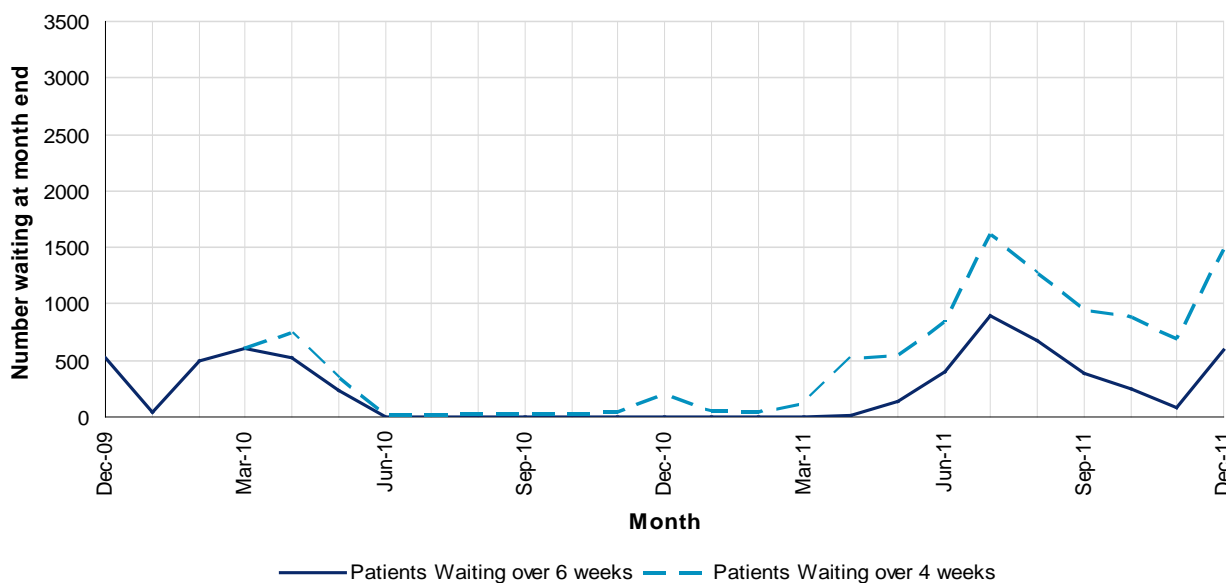


Chart 2: Key Radiology tests. Patients waiting over six and four weeks, NHS Scotland.



Data for total patients waiting and those waiting over four, six and nine weeks is provided at NHS Board level in the [List of Tables](#).

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 6 weeks. These eight tests/investigations are:

- Upper Endoscopy,
- Lower Endoscopy (other than Colonoscopy),
- Colonoscopy,
- Cystoscopy,
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI),
- Computer Tomography (CT),
- 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 2008 to 31 December 2011	Excel [325KB]

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Further Information

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

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Appendix

A1 – Background Information

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

The Scottish Government introduced a 9 week maximum waiting time for these eight key diagnostic tests and investigations from 31 December 2007. This wait was reduced to 6 weeks from 31 March 2009.

NHS Boards also supply data that allows measurement of the number of patients waiting over 4 weeks. The number of patients waiting over 4 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 centres 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. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is carried out by individual NHS Boards in collaboration with ISD.

A2 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details)

Metadata Indicator	Description
Website	http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/
Description	Monthly summary of eight key diagnostic tests and investigations waiting lists.
Theme	Health and Social Care
Topic	Access and Waiting Times
Format	Excel workbooks
Data source(s)	Aggregate counts accredited and derived from individual NHS Scotland Boards are submitted monthly to ISD using a defined Excel template. Associated with individual NHS Scotland Boards Local Delivery Plans integrated to the 18Week RTT national standards.
Date that data is acquired	Deadline for data submission is the 22nd of each month, though files can be resubmitted up to 1 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 2008 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.
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	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. 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 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, 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. Reported data are compared to previous figures and to expected trends.

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. Collaborative efforts by the health departments of the four countries to produce comparable figures on waiting times is currently underway by the UK Comparative Waiting Times Group.
Accessibility	It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines. See attached link for further details: http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/Accessibility/
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 measure	Count of number of patents waiting over 6, 9 and 4 weeks for Scotland and NHS Scotland Health Board
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published 29 July 2010. http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf
Help email	NSS.isddmmi@nhs.net
Date form completed	28/02/2012

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 and, separately, those receiving extended Pre-Release Access.

Standard Pre-Release Access:

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

Extended Pre-Release Access

Extended Pre-Release Access of 8 working days is given to a small number of named individuals in the Scottish Government Health Department (Analytical Services Division). This Pre-Release Access is for the sole purpose of enabling that department to gain an understanding of the statistics prior to briefing others in Scottish Government (during the period of standard Pre-Release Access).

Scottish Government Health Department (Analytical Services Division)

Early Access for Quality Assurance

These statistics will also have been made available to those who needed access to help quality assure the publication:

NHS Board Information and Delivery Leads

A4 – About 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 NHS Scotland 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.