

Publication Report



Audiology Waiting Times

Quarter ending 31 March 2012

Publication date – 29 May 2012

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Introduction

This publication presents information about how long patients (adults and children) have waited for Audiology assessment and treatment provided by the NHS in Scotland. Audiology treatments include the fitting of hearing aids, treatment of symptoms of [tinnitus](#) and helping patients with balance problems.

The waiting times information in this publication covers the period January to March 2012, together with figures from earlier quarters for comparison. It shows the time waited by patients at each stage of assessment and treatment. The time that patients have waited for a review following the fitting of a hearing aid is also included.

The Scottish Government require the NHS in Scotland to measure the time waited by patients for treatment, which includes the specialty of Audiology. The Scottish Government has set a standard for the NHS in Scotland to achieve an 18 weeks maximum wait from referral to treatment. At the moment, patients who attend Audiology services have their time recorded and measured at each 'stage of treatment' i.e. time to assessment and time to treatment. These figures are used to assess how the service is performing against the 18 weeks waiting time standard.

It is important to be aware that information on Audiology waiting times is recorded in different ways in different locations. For example, some NHS Boards offer a one-stop clinic where suitable patients receive a specialist consultation and undergo treatment at the same visit. The way in which waiting times are recorded for these one-stop clinics varies between NHS Boards. See the [one-stop clinic table](#) in the Data Quality section of this report for more detail.

It is not yet possible to comment on long term trends in Scottish waiting times for Audiology as complete data has not been available until recently (see the [data completeness table](#) for more detail).

Key points

- During the quarter ending March 2012, approximately 24 000 patients were seen for a first assessment with an Audiology specialist.
- Nationally, waiting times for Audiology assessment and treatment have improved in the last year. However, there has been a slight increase in Audiology waiting times during the quarter ending March 2012.
- Half of patients seen by an Audiology specialist between January and March 2012 had their first appointment within six weeks of being referred and 90% within 12 weeks.
- Half of patients were fitted with a hearing aid within six weeks of their assessment appointment and 96% within 12 weeks.
- For those sites which report on 'one-stop clinics', 89% of patients attended and were treated within 18 weeks (less than 126 days) of their referral to that service.

Results and Commentary

Current waiting time standard

Audiology waiting times are subject to the Referral to Treatment standard of 18 weeks. However, NHS Boards work to locally agreed 'stage of treatment' targets which total 18 weeks (for example, maximum 11 week wait from referral to assessment and a maximum 7 week wait from assessment to fitting of hearing aid). As each NHS Board is measured against a different target, it is appropriate to compare patients who waited beyond 12 weeks.

Audiology 'one-stop clinics' are subject to the 18 weeks Referral to Treatment standard as the patient receives a specialist consultation and, where appropriate, commences treatment at the same visit.

How long patients waited

The increase in total patients seen between March 2011 and 2012 (Figure 1) is mainly due to improved recording practices within NHS Boards; in particular NHS Ayrshire & Arran and Greater Glasgow & Clyde (refer to [data completeness table](#) for more detail).

Nationally, waiting times for a first contact appointment and fitting of hearing aid have improved in the last year. However, there has been a slight increase in these waiting times when compared with the previous quarter.

Please be aware that waiting times differ between NHS Boards and type of patient (adult or paediatric) and these detailed statistics are available in the [list of tables](#).

Figure 1: Audiology patients seen and key waits, NHS Scotland*

Stage of treatment	Patients seen		Patients waited 12 weeks or more (%)		Average weeks waited (median)	
	Quarter ending		Quarter ending		Quarter ending	
	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	Mar 2011	Mar 2012
Referral to first contact appointment	16 903	21 839	28.1	10.3	7	6
Assessment to fitting of hearing aid	7 763	9 236	21.1	4.2	6	6
Assessment to treatment (other)	1 326	5 267	3.4	0.9	0	0
Fitting of hearing aid to review ¹	4 252	3 633	44.8	31.8	10	8
Referral to treatment at a one-stop clinic ²	735	2 353	x	x	13	14

¹ Fitting of hearing aid to review is not subject to the 18 week referral to treatment standard.

² NHS Borders, Fife and Tayside identified patients who waited for a one-stop service in quarter ending March 2011; NHS Borders, Fife, Forth Valley, Highland, Lothian and Tayside identified patients who waited for a one-stop service in quarter ending March 2012.

X Not applicable

*For detailed statistics at NHS Board level, please refer to the completed waits excel file in the [List of tables](#).

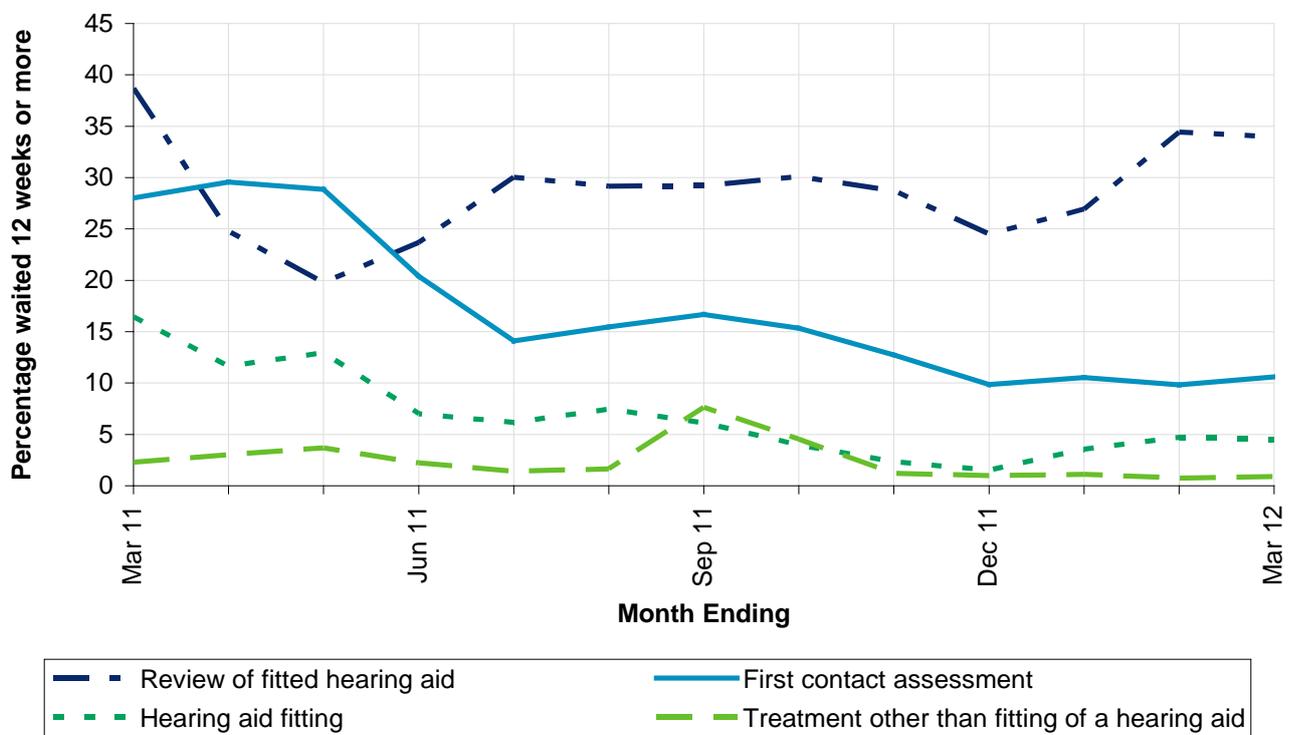
Many patients are fitted with a hearing aid or commence other treatment on the same day as their first contact appointment. These treatments include, for example, addressing balance problems and treatment for tinnitus. Many patients are also referred to other specialties, such as Ear, Nose & Throat, to receive their treatment. Therefore, waiting times for other treatment tend to be low (i.e. a median wait of zero weeks (0-6 days), Figure 1).

Patients waiting for a review appointment, following the fitting of a hearing aid, are not subject to the 18 weeks referral to treatment standard and patients often wait longer for these appointments. 31.8% of patients waited 12 weeks or more during quarter ending March 2012 (Figure 1). Review appointments, which follow up the patient’s progress with a new hearing aid, are an important part of the patient’s experience and this is why waiting times are still collected for reviews.

For the quarter ending March 2012, six NHS Boards identified patients who have attended a one-stop clinic. During quarter ending March 2011, only three NHS Boards identified those patients who attended a one-stop service and therefore the number of patients recorded as seen at a one-stop clinic last year is significantly lower. Refer to the [one-stop clinic table](#) for more detail around the different recording practices.

Figure 2 shows that waiting times for Audiology assessment and fitting of hearing aid have improved in the last year. There is no improvement observable for waiting times for a review appointment, following the fitting of a hearing aid. It is not yet possible to comment on longer term trends in waiting times as complete data has not been available until fairly recently (see [data completeness table](#)).

Figure 2: Percentage of patients who waited 12 weeks or more, NHS Scotland



Note: Chart does not show patients who received their first assessment and treatment at a one-stop clinic.

Patients waiting at month end

The information in this section presents a summary of Audiology waiting times information at Scotland level, for patients who are waiting at the month end. This is the most useful measure for NHS managers who may need to take prospective action to make sure patient waits do not exceed the local target for that stage of treatment. This measure, however, does not report how long patients actually waited until they received care.

Summary information on the actual time that patients waited for each stage of treatment can be found in the previous section entitled '[How Long Patients waited](#)'.

Figure 3: Patients waiting at 31 March 2012, NHS Scotland**

Stage of treatment	Total patients waiting	6 weeks or more (%)	9 weeks or more (%)	12 weeks or more (%)	18 weeks or more (%)
Referral to first contact appointment	12 715	37.1	16.3	7.6	x
Assessment to fitting of hearing aid	4 481	29.5	11.3	5.0	x
Assessment to treatment (other)	397	39.8	14.6	6.8	x
Fitting of hearing aid to review ¹	8 716	69.9	56.6	45.3	x
Referral to treatment at a one-stop clinic ²	2 407	x	x	28.1	7.5

1 Fitting of hearing aid to review is not subject to the 18 week referral to treatment standard.

2 NHS Borders and Fife identified patients waiting to attend a one-stop service in quarter ending March 2011; NHS Borders, Fife, Forth Valley and Tayside identified patients waiting to attend a one-stop service in quarter ending March 2012.

X Not applicable

** For detailed statistics at NHS Board level, please refer to the ongoing waits excel file in the [List of tables](#).

Glossary

Tinnitus: A buzzing, ringing, or whistling sound in one or both ears occurring without an external stimulus

Census date: A point in time, usually month end, which is used as an end date when calculating the length of time that patients have been on a waiting list.

Patients waiting for a first contact appointment: The number of patients who have been referred to Audiology Services from any source, for assessment of any kind, waiting for a first contact appointment that will commence a new episode of care (i.e. include re-assessments). The number of patients waiting at the census date corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the receipt of the referral.

Completed wait for a first contact appointment: The waiting time experienced by patients who received a first contact appointment, for assessment of any kind that commenced a new episode of care, during the quarter (i.e. includes re-assessments). The number of patients seen corresponds to the length of time they waited.

Patients waiting from assessment to fitting of hearing aid(s): The number of patients waiting for fitting of hearing aid(s). The number of patients waiting at the census date corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the date of the decision that a hearing aid is to be fitted.

Completed wait from assessment to fitting of hearing aid(s): The waiting time experienced by patients for fitting of hearing aid(s). The number of patients fitted with hearing aids during the quarter corresponds to the length of time that elapsed from the date of the decision that a hearing aid is to be fitted to the date of the fitting. If the hearing aid was fitted at the first contact appointment, the waiting time experienced by the patient is recorded as zero weeks.

Patients waiting from assessment to treatment: The number of patients waiting for Audiology treatment other than the fitting of a hearing aid, this includes but is not limited to; treatment of balance problems, tinnitus treatment and counselling. The number of patients waiting at the census date corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the date of the decision to treat.

Completed wait from assessment to treatment: The waiting time experienced by patients for Audiology treatment other than the fitting of a hearing aid, this includes but is not limited to; treatment of balance problems, tinnitus treatment and counselling. The number of patients treated during the quarter corresponds to the length of time that elapsed from the date of the decision to treat to the date of treatment. If the treatment was administered at the first contact appointment, the waiting time experienced by the patient is recorded as zero weeks.

Patients waiting from fitting of hearing aid(s) to review: The number of patients waiting for a first hearing aid review following fitting. The number of patients waiting at the census date corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the date of fitting. This final stage is not subject to the 18 Weeks RTT target.

Completed wait from fitting of hearing aid(s) to review: The waiting time experienced by patients for a first hearing aid review following fitting. The number of patients who

received a first hearing aid review during the quarter corresponds to the length of time that elapsed from the date of fitting.

One-stop clinic: A service provided by some NHS Boards whereby the patient will receive a specialist consultation and, where appropriate, undergo treatment at the same visit.

Median: This is a measure of the typical (average) waiting time. The median is also known as the 50th percentile and signifies that 50% of patients waited up to the time shown; 50% waited longer.

As Audiology data is collected in single week groupings, the median is similarly represented in weeks. E.g. a median wait of 3 weeks represents a grouping of 21 – 27 days.

90th percentile: The 90th percentile wait indicates the maximum time 9 out of every 10 patients waited. 90% of patients waited up to the time shown; 10% waited longer.

As Audiology data is collected in single week groupings, the 90th percentile is similarly represented in weeks. E.g. a 90th percentile wait of 3 weeks represents a grouping of 21 – 27 days.

List of Tables

Completed waits	719KB
1a Referral to treatment at a one-stop clinic	Quarters ending March 2012, Dec 2011 & March 2011
2a Referral to first contact appointment	Quarters ending March 2012, Dec 2011 & March 2011
3a Assessment to fitting of hearing aid	Quarters ending March 2012, Dec 2011 & March 2011
4a Assessment to treatment (other)	Quarters ending March 2012, Dec 2011 & March 2011
5a Fitting of hearing aid(s) to review	Quarters ending March 2012, Dec 2011 & March 2011
Charts 1a to 4a showing trend in waiting times (completed waits)	March 2010 – March 2012
Ongoing waits	1356KB
1b Referral to treatment at a one-stop clinic	Months ending Jan – March 2012, Dec 2011, March 2011
2b Referral to first contact appointment	Months ending Jan – March 2012, Dec 2011, March 2011
3b Assessment to fitting of hearing aid	Months ending Jan – March 2012, Dec 2011, March 2011
4b Assessment to treatment (other)	Months ending Jan – March 2012, Dec 2011, March 2011
5b Fitting of hearing aid(s) to review	Months ending Jan – March 2012, Dec 2011, March 2011
Charts 1b to 4b showing trend in waiting times (ongoing waits)	March 2010 – March 2012

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Further Information

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

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Appendix

A1 – Background Information

The national maximum waiting time for the whole patient journey from referral to treatment is now 18 weeks from 31 December 2011. Audiology waiting times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 weeks Referral To Treatment (18 Weeks RTT) standard. Audiology patient administration systems are currently being updated in order to improve information capture to support the measuring and reporting of the whole patient journey from referral to treatment.

NHS Boards are working with Scottish Government and ISD to update systems in order to improve information capture to support the measuring and reporting of the whole patient journey from referral to treatment.

While systems are implemented, a pragmatic, interim solution is to measure and report the best available information about the different 'stages' of the journey for Audiology patients. The first contact appointment, assessment to fitting of hearing aid(s), assessment to treatment (excluding fitting of hearing aids) stages of the journey are an indicator of progress towards the 18 Weeks RTT target. NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of patients who are waiting at month end and the number of patients seen who experienced a waiting time during the quarter for the stages.

As NHS Boards progress towards managing their patients along an 18 Weeks RTT pathway, several NHS Boards have introduced 'one-stop' clinics, where patients can be assessed and treated in a single appointment. NHS Boards are measuring one-stop patients against an 18 Weeks RTT journey. Information relating to Audiology patients on an 18 Weeks RTT pathway should be included as part of the overall 18 Weeks RTT data submission to ISD. 18 Weeks RTT data are still under development and were published in February 2011 for the first time.

From January 2011, NHS Boards have the option to record 'one-stop' patients in their Audiology data submission to ISD. For the quarter ending 30 December 2011, some NHS Boards have submitted waiting times information for one-stop clinics for Audiology patients. Further details are shown in the [Data Quality](#) section.

ISD receives aggregate Audiology data from each NHS Board and so patient information can not be systematically validated by ISD. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is carried out by individual NHS Boards in collaboration with ISD. Further information on data quality can be found in the [Data Quality](#) section.

A2 – Data Quality

Audiology waiting times has been collected nationally from April 2007, since the announcement by the Scottish Government that the specialty of Audiology be included in the 18 weeks referral to treatment standard. Although Audiology data is still under development there have been significant improvements in data quality and this is reflected in the completeness and quality of the data over time.

General data quality issues

NHS Ayrshire & Arran: Early in 2011 NHS Ayrshire & Arran noted inaccuracies in their reported data, which has resulted in all previous data being suppressed. The quality and robustness of the data has since been improved and from January 2012 all data items are able to be measured. A minor glitch in reporting meant that the number of paediatric patients waiting for review was not available for March 2012.

NHS Dumfries & Galloway: An error was identified in reported length of wait for some patients seen for treatment (excluding fitting of hearing aids) whereby the patients have been incorrectly recorded as having a zero week wait. This has now been fixed and figures from September 2011 are accurate.

NHS Fife: From March 2011 all adult patients are triaged appropriately and reported as being seen at a one-stop service.

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde: A change in recording practice has resulted in an increase in the numbers of patients recorded as seen from November 2011. This change means that the data collection is much more robust and covers all referrals to the service.

NHS Highland: Paediatric patients are given an immediate appointment for assessment to fitting of hearing aid(s) and as such may be reported as seen but not waiting. A minor error was found in the reports from Argyll that meant fewer patients were reported than seen; this error has now been fixed and subsequently December 2011 data has been amended to reflect this.

NHS Lanarkshire: Data recording methods differ slightly between tables as different patient administration systems are used to record Audiology patients; first contact completed waits and numbers waiting are calculated from TrakCare whilst fitting and Treatment data is taken from Practice Navigator.

NHS Western Isles: Review patients have been reported incorrectly. The department has now reviewed this and from April 2012 reporting practices have changed.

One-stop clinic table

The option to record 'one-stop' patients separately was introduced in January 2011 and the number of patients seen does not yet accurately reflect the actual number of patients who receive a one-stop service. The different recording practices for one-stop clinics is summarised in the table below.

Board	Table in which data is recorded for:	
	One-stop clinic Ongoing waits	One-stop clinic Completed waits
Ayrshire & Arran	2b	2a (actual wait) & 3a/4a (zero wait)
Borders	1b	1a
Fife	1b	1a
Forth Valley	1b	1a
Grampian	2b	2a (actual wait) & 3a/4a (zero wait)
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	2b	2a (actual wait) & 3a/4a (zero wait)
Highland	2b	1a
Lothian	2b	1a
Orkney	2b	2a (actual wait) & 3a/4a (zero wait)
Tayside	1b	1a

Note: NHS Dumfries & Galloway, Lanarkshire, Shetland and Western Isles do not provide a one-stop service.

Data completeness table

The completeness of the data submitted for each NHS Board is summarised in the table below.

	Quarter End									
	Mar-2010	Jun-2010	Sep-2010	Dec-2010	Mar-2011	Jun-2011	Sep-2011	Dec-2011	Mar-2012	
Ayrshire & Arran					1	2	3	3		
Borders										
Dumfries & Galloway										
Fife										
Forth Valley										
Grampian										
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	4		4	4	4	4				
Highland										
Lanarkshire	5	5	6							
Lothian	7	7	7							
Orkney										
Shetland										
Tayside		8								
Western Isles										

■ Data not available
■ Partial Data available
■ Data published

- 1 Data for patients seen not available. Paediatric data shown within adult data.
- 2 Distribution for patients seen not available. Paediatric data shown within adult data.
- 3 Distribution for patients seen not available.
- 4 Data for Clyde sites not available.
- 5 Data not available for adult and paediatric patients waiting for hearing aid fitting, treatment or review.
- 6 Data not available for adult patients waiting for a hearing aid fitting, treatment or review.
- 7 Distribution for adult patients seen not available. Full data available for patients waiting.
- 8 Adult data only.

A3 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details)

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication title	Audiology Waiting Times http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Audiology/
Description	Monthly and quarterly summary of Audiology waiting times and 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 18 Weeks RTT national standards.
Date that data are acquired	Deadline for data submission is the 23rd 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 July 2009 to date. There have been no delays in reporting.
Continuity of data	Information relating to Audiology waiting times in NHS Boards has been collected nationally since April 2007 with a revised dataset introduced in December 2008.
Revisions statement	A correction to the methodology for counting Audiology waits has been applied from the August 2011 publication. This affects the calculation of the number waiting over a given time (e.g. over 12 weeks). http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Audiology/
Revisions relevant to this publication	http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Audiology/
Concepts and definitions	Definitions not contained in this report are available at: http://www.isdscotland.org/Products-and-Services/Data-Definitions-and-References/
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	These data are classified as developmental. 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.
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 .
Coherence and clarity	Key statistics for the latest quarter are linked to on the main Waiting Times page http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/ Statistics are presented within Excel spreadsheets. NHS Board and national figures are presented. Further features to aid clarity: 1. Attendances and performance data by Adult and Paediatric patients are available in separate tables to enable users to select a single measure for analysis. 2. Tables are printer friendly. 3. Key data presented graphically.
Value type and unit of measurement	Number and percentage of patients seen, number and percentage of patients waiting; by NHS Board and by patient type (adult, paediatric).
Disclosure	The ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol is followed.
Official Statistics designation	Developmental data. Not yet undergone assessment by UK Statistics Authority.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Awaiting assessment by UK Statistics Authority.
Last published	28 February 2012
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Date of first publication	24 April 2007
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Date form completed	29 May 2012

A4 – 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 Management Information

These statistics will also have been made available to those who needed access to 'management information', i.e. as part of the delivery of health and care:

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.

A5 – 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 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 (i.e. assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as complying with the Code of Practice)
- National Statistics (i.e. legacy, still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- Official Statistics (i.e. 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](#).