

Publication Report



Diagnostic Waiting Times

Monthly Data to 31 March 2014

Publication date – 27 May 2014



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Introduction

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 highlight where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS Scotland's performance. Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland continues to be committed to improving the information on waiting times along with our key stakeholders, the NHS Boards and Scottish Government.

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Weeks Referral to Treatment standard (a maximum whole journey waiting time of 18 weeks from general practitioner to treatment).

On 31 March 2009, the Scottish Government introduced the waiting time standard that patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations would be waiting less than six weeks. This supersedes nine weeks, which was initially introduced on 31 December 2007.

Waiting Times 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

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. The number of patients reported as waiting includes those who have an appointment date or those who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester.

Key points

- At 31 March 2014, 95.4% of patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations had been waiting less than six weeks. When comparing to the position at 31 March 2013, this has decreased from 96.2%. This may be due to an approximate 15% increase in the total number of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test and investigation.
- The drop in performance has primarily affected patients waiting for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test and investigation. The majority of these patients have been waiting over six weeks to be seen in NHS Grampian, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Fife.
- NHS Boards are currently working towards local targets that patients will wait no longer than four weeks. At 31 March 2014, 87.2% had been waiting less than four weeks. When comparing to the previous year, performance against the local target has decreased from 89.2%.

Results and Commentary

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

All Key Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

Table 1 shows the number of [patients waiting](#) for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. At 31 March 2014, 95.4% (51,718 out of 54,190 patients on the list) had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of six weeks in NHS Scotland. This has decreased from 96.2% at 31 December 2013.

NHS Boards are working to local targets that patients will wait no more than four weeks. Although the overall number of patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations has increased by around 7000 when comparing to the 31 December 2013, performance against the local target has improved from 86.8% to 87.2% at 31 March 2014.

The proportion of patients waiting over six and four weeks has dropped by 0.8% and 2.0% respectively when comparing to the previous year.

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 March 2014	54 190	6 914	2 472
28 February 2014	52 580	5 366	1 711
31 January 2014	52 576	4 571	2 420
31 December 2013	47 249	6 252	1 787
31 March 2013	46 390	4 990	1 760

Caution should be taken when interpreting this data as there are differences in performance between waits for each Endoscopy and Radiology diagnostic tests and between NHS Boards. Please see the following sections below for more detail.

Endoscopy Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

[Table 2](#) shows the number of patients waiting for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test at month end. At 31 March 2014, 90.1% (14,006 out of 15,551 on the list) of patients had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of six weeks for one of the key Endoscopy diagnostic tests and investigations. This has decreased from 94.1% at 31 December 2013.

With NHS Boards working towards local targets of four weeks – Table 2 shows that 76.2% (11,845 out of 15,551 patients on list) of patients waiting for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test had been waiting less than four weeks at 31 March 2014. This has decreased from 84.7% at 31 December 2013.

When comparing the six week standard and four week target to the previous year, 31 March 2013, the proportion waiting over six and four weeks has increased by 4.0% and 9.7% respectively.

The decrease in NHS Scotland’s performance against the six week standard is primarily due to increased waiting times for an Upper Endoscopy, Lower Endoscopy and Colonoscopy. The majority of these patients are waiting to be seen in NHS Grampian, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Fife;

- NHS Grampian report that the increase in long waits is related to insufficient recurring internal capacity. This is being addressed through a mix of short, medium and longer term plans and actions. However the situation is likely to show little or no improvement until at least the end of June when additional internal capacity is secured and later, when longer term plans for specialist training and task transfer begin to take shape over the next year.
- NHS Forth Valley continue to experience increased demand for endoscopy services. Additional evening and weekend clinics are taking place to increase capacity alongside more procedures being undertaken at Golden Jubilee National Hospital.
- NHS Fife have ongoing staff resource issues which are being addressed locally alongside weekend sessions being undertaken to reduce waiting times.

The performance against the local four week target has dropped due to a noticeable increase in the proportion of patients waiting over four weeks for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test in NHS Grampian. This is due to the reasons outlined above.

When comparing performance trends at NHS Board level, please see [data quality](#).

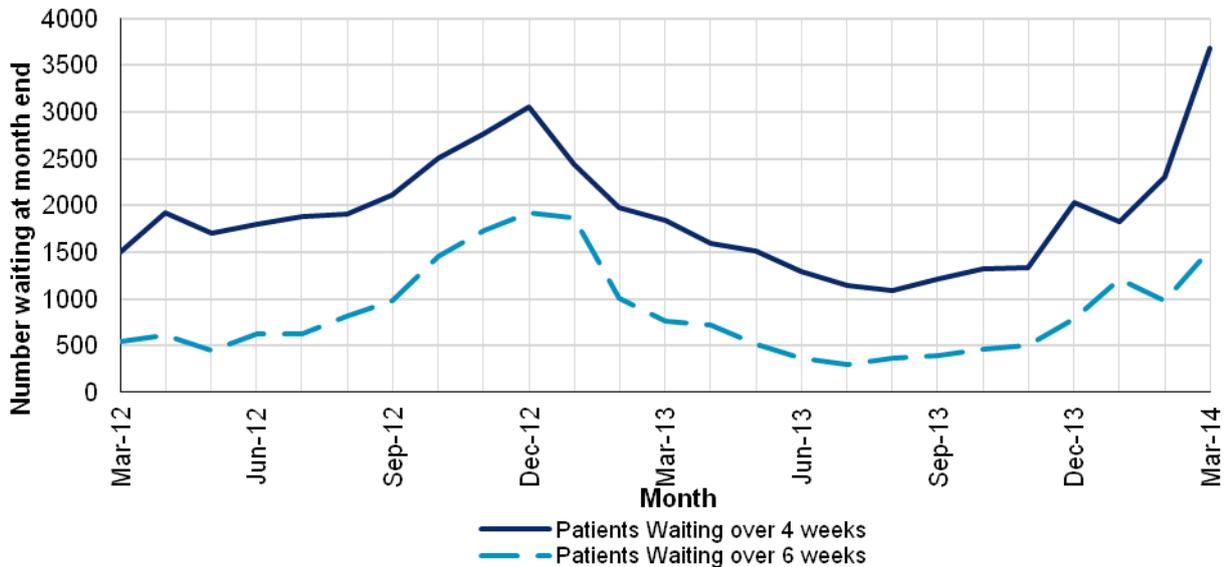
Table 2: Patients waiting for each Key Endoscopy Diagnostic Test, NHS Scotland

Diagnostic Test	Indicator	31-Mar-13	31-Dec-13	31-Jan-14	28-Feb-14	31-Mar-14
All Endoscopy	Number on List	13 076	13 337	14 918	15 055	15 551
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1 847	2 037	1 822	2 323	3 706
	Waiting over 6 weeks	766	790	1 214	985	1 545
Upper Endoscopy	Number on List	4 640	4 593	5 231	5 239	5 462
	Waiting over 4 weeks	464	467	453	673	1 222
	Waiting over 6 weeks	183	110	257	268	503
Lower Endoscopy (excl. colonoscopy)	Number on List	1 769	1 885	2 024	2 016	2 059
	Waiting over 4 weeks	351	370	324	380	657
	Waiting over 6 weeks	183	186	245	204	311
Colonoscopy	Number on List	4 647	5 014	5 498	5 647	5 813
	Waiting over 4 weeks	754	713	630	785	1 363
	Waiting over 6 weeks	359	344	431	395	609
Cystoscopy	Number on List	2 020	1 845	2 165	2 153	2 217
	Waiting over 4 weeks	278	487	415	485	464
	Waiting over 6 weeks	41	150	281	118	122

[Chart 1](#) shows the number of patients waiting over four and six weeks for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test from March 2012 to March 2014. From March 2012 until December 2012 there was an increase in the number of patients waiting over both four and six weeks. Due

to NHS Lothian’s increase in capacity, the number of Endoscopy waits over four and six weeks continued to drop until August 2013. However, there has been a notable increase over the last three months in the number of patients waiting over 4 weeks for a key Endoscopy diagnostic test. This rise is primarily due the aforementioned issues in NHS Grampian.

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



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

Radiology Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

[Table 3](#) shows the number of patients in NHS Scotland waiting for a key Radiology diagnostic test at month end. At 31 March 2014, 97.6% (37,712 out of 38,639 on the list) of patients throughout NHS Scotland were recorded as having been waiting less than six weeks for one of the key Radiology diagnostic tests and investigations. Performance has increased from 97.1% at 31 December 2013.

With NHS Boards working towards local targets of four weeks, 91.7% (35,431 out of 38,639 patients on list) of patients waiting for a key Radiology diagnostic test had been waiting less than four weeks at 31 March 2014. This has increased from 87.6% at 31 December 2013.

[Table 3](#) shows that there has been an approximate 15% increase in the total number of patients waiting for one of the four key Radiology diagnostic tests. The largest increase is in patients waiting for a Non-Obstetric ultrasound which has subsequently seen an increase in the number of patients waiting over six weeks.

NHS Fife have experienced an increase in demand alongside resource issues which has affected the waiting times within their Radiology department. NHS Ayrshire and Arran have also experienced an increase in the number of referrals and are working on a local plan to increase capacity to reduce waiting times.

Despite the increase in list size, [Table 3](#) shows an overall reduction, from 31 December 2013, in the number of patients waiting over four weeks for each of the key Radiology diagnostic tests. The number of patients waiting over four weeks for an MRI Scan and CT Scan has dropped by over 30%.

When comparing to the previous year, it should be noted that although there has been a rise in the total number of patients on the waiting list, the proportion of patients waiting over the six weeks standard and four week local target has dropped.

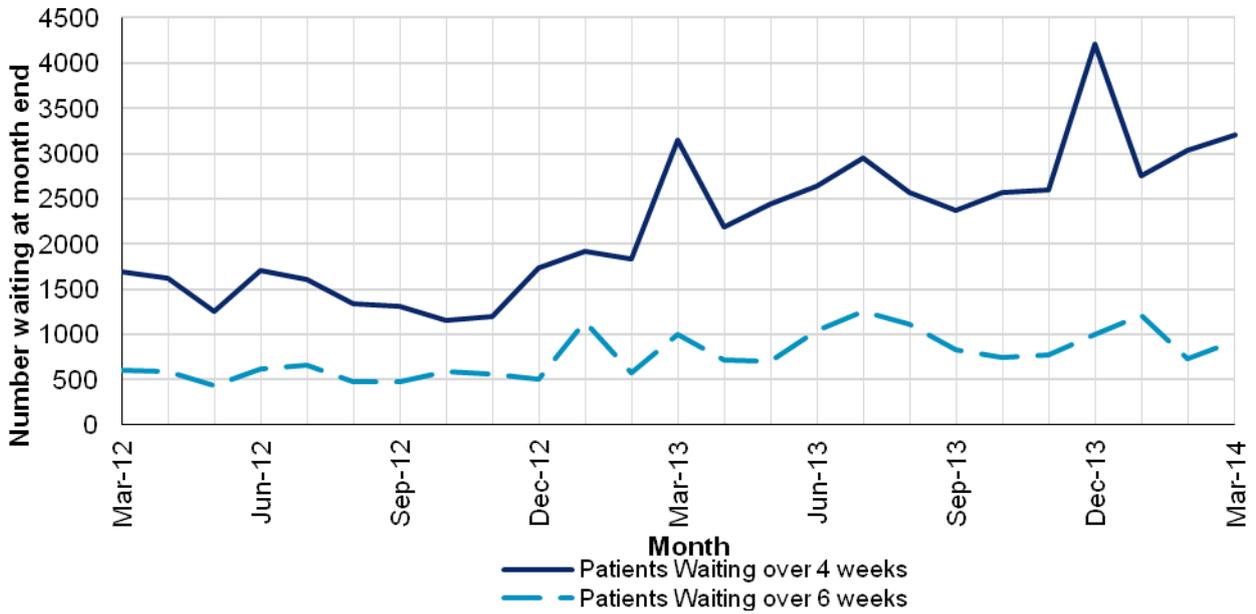
Table 3: Patients waiting for each Key Radiology Diagnostic test, NHS Scotland

Diagnostic Test	Indicator	31- Mar-13	31- Dec-13	31-Jan- 14	28-Feb- 14	31- Mar-14
All Radiology	Number on List	33 314	33 912	37 658	37 525	38 639
	Waiting over 4 weeks	3 143	4 215	2 749	3 043	3 208
	Waiting over 6 weeks	994	997	1 206	726	927
Computer Tomography (CT)	Number on List	7378	7780	8682	8265	8405
	Waiting over 4 weeks	319	590	579	500	381
	Waiting over 6 weeks	40	188	285	140	22
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)	Number on List	8559	8777	9556	9650	9618
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1450	1311	956	956	876
	Waiting over 6 weeks	651	422	514	282	278
Barium Studies	Number on List	251	262	271	307	252
	Waiting over 4 weeks	0	13	4	4	4
	Waiting over 6 weeks	0	0	1	0	0
Non-obstetric ultrasound	Number on List	17126	17093	19149	19303	20364
	Waiting over 4 weeks	1347	2301	1210	1583	1947
	Waiting over 6 weeks	303	387	406	304	627

[Chart 2](#) shows the number of patients waiting over four and six weeks from 31 March 2012 to 31 March 2014. While the number of patients waiting over six weeks has remained fairly consistent over the last two years, the number waiting over four weeks reached a 2-year high at 31 December 2013. The sharp increase was primarily due to NHS Lanarkshire’s radiology department experiencing resource issues which have since been resolved.

There has been an overall decrease in waits over 4 weeks when comparing to 31 December 2013. However, [Chart 2](#) illustrates a slight upward trend following the significant drop at 31 January 2014. NHS Fife had a waiting time initiative in place to help reduce waiting times for Radiology diagnostic tests but this has not been sustainable due to ongoing resource issues. The issue for Non-Obstetric Ultrasound referrals in NHS Ayrshire & Arran has also affected this increase.

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



Data for total patients waiting and those waiting over four, six and nine weeks for any key radiology test provided at NHS Board level is provided 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 six weeks. These eight tests/investigations are:

- Upper Endoscopy,
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy),
- Colonoscopy,
- Cystoscopy,
- Computer Tomography (CT),
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI),
- 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
4	Waiting times for diagnostic tests : monthly census dates	31 March 2012 to 31 March 2014	Excel [209KB]

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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 standard (18 Weeks RTT) with waiting times information on the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations having been collected nationally since 2006.

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 also supply data that allows measurement of the number of patients waiting over four weeks. The number of patients waiting over four 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, however, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is carried out by individual NHS Boards in collaboration with ISD.

A2 – Data Quality

ISD receives aggregate data on Diagnostic Waiting Times from each NHS Board where the data for the previous quarter is confirmed by the submitting Board. Although aggregated data cannot be systematically validated by ISD, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. 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.

Specific NHS Board Data Quality Issues:

NHS Grampian

Caution should be taken when comparing performance prior to July 2013. This is due to NHS Grampian making improvements to their local reporting processes which has seen an increase in the number of patients who are waiting over 6 weeks as shown in [here](#):

NHS Western Isles

NHS Western Isles are unable to provide true waiting list size, for Radiology diagnostic tests, as direct access to their RIS is not available. As a proxy, NHS Western Isles compile figures for Diagnostics from SCI Store on 15th of the month post census date. This has been the process since October 2011.

A3 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details)

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication title	Diagnostic Waiting Times
Description	Monthly summary of patients waiting times for eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.
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 18Weeks RTT national standards.
Date that data are acquired	Deadline for data submission is the 22nd of each month, though files can be resubmitted up to one 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 2007 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.
Revisions relevant to this publication	26 November 2013 - NHS Lanarkshire revised figures for Upper and Lower Endoscopy diagnostic tests dating back to October 2011. This was due to a report grouping issue however this did not affect the total number on list or the number of long waits.
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	<p>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.</p> <p>Other uses of the data include information requests for a variety of customers, e.g. research charities; public companies; freedom of</p>

	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, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. 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.
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 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 measurement	Count of number of patients waiting over four, six and nine weeks for Scotland and NHS Scotland Health Boards
Disclosure	The ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol is followed.
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published 29 th July 2010. http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf
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Help email	NSS.isdwaitingtimes@nhs.net
Date form completed	16 May 2014

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)

A5 – 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 (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.