About this Release
This publication contains information about how long people waited to start treatment for psychological therapies provided by the NHS in Scotland. This information has been published quarterly since August 2013.

The systems for collecting data locally are still being developed, and as a result, some people who had treatment for psychological therapies are not included in this publication. However, the information in this publication does give a good indication of waiting times in most areas of Scotland. The volume of information we have been able to collect from NHS Boards has increased each quarter and we expect this to continue to increase in coming months.

Key Points

- Waiting times information for Psychological Therapies are developmental. NHS Boards are working with ISD and the Scottish Government to improve the consistency and completeness of the information. The target that at least 90% of people waiting for Psychological Therapies should start treatment within 18 weeks is due for delivery from December 2014.

- NHS Boards have had to develop new systems to enable reporting on Psychological Therapies waiting times.

- During the quarter ending December 2014, just over 10,500 people started treatment for psychological therapies in Scotland. The initial estimates from data at this stage of development indicate that around 81% of people were seen within 18 weeks.

Background
The Scottish Government has set a target for the NHS in Scotland to deliver a maximum 18 week waiting time from a patient’s referral to treatment for Psychological Therapies from December 2014. Following the conclusion of previously planned work on a tolerance level for Psychological Therapies waiting times and engagement with NHS Boards and other stakeholders, the Scottish Government has determined that the Psychological Therapies target should be delivered for at least 90% of patients.
Psychological therapies refer to a range of interventions, based on psychological concepts and theory, which are designed to help people understand and make changes to their thinking, behaviour and relationships in order to relieve distress and to improve functioning. The target applies specifically to psychological therapies for treatment of a mental illness or disorder.

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering faster access to psychological therapies for those with mental illness or disorder. Patients and clinicians have identified access to therapies as a key service improvement to better meet their needs and expectations. Psychological therapies have an important role in helping people with mental health problems, who should have access to effective treatment, both physical and psychological. It is generally accepted that these therapies can have demonstrable benefit in reducing distress, symptoms, risk of harm to self or others, health related quality of life and return to work. The Scottish Government recognises that delivering faster access is a significant and complex challenge, and sees the target as an opportunity to drive local service redesign informed by evidence.

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Further Information
Further information can be found in the Full Publication Report or on the ISD website