Chronic Pain Waiting Times in NHSScotland
Quarter ending 31 March 2018

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland (Experimental)

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About this release
This release by Information Services Division (ISD) on the length of time new patients waited for a first appointment at NHS chronic pain and pain psychology clinics is shown by NHS Board for quarter ending 31 March 2018. These data are considered experimental and should be used with caution, as there are data quality issues and incomplete data from Pain Psychology Clinics.

Main Points
Pain Clinics

Twelve out of fourteen NHS Boards offer pain clinics to patients and provide data to ISD on how long patients wait to attend their first appointment based on the 18 weeks referral to treatment (RTT) Standard.

- Between 1 January and 31 March 2018, there were 4,874 new patients referred to a pain clinic. This compares with 4,669 referrals in the previous quarter.
- Of the 2,572 patients who attended (were seen) for their first appointment between 1 January and 31 March 2018, 1,840 (71.5%) attended within 18 weeks, comparable to the previous quarter (72.3%).
- Of the 4,387 patients who were still waiting for their first appointment at 31 March 2018, 768 (17.5%) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks.
- NHS Borders, NHS Fife, NHS Lanarkshire & NHS Orkney saw all their patients within 18 weeks; while NHS Forth Valley & NHS Lothian saw the majority of their patients within 18 weeks.
- 1,295 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. 359 (12.1%) patients did not attend their first appointment and did not notify the hospital.

Length of time patients waited from referral to first appointment at a Chronic Pain Clinic, Quarter ending March 2018, NHSScotland

![Bar chart showing the distribution of waiting times for chronic pain appointments.](image-url)
Pain Psychology Clinics
Due to the developmental nature these data should be interpreted with caution. Ten NHS Boards provide Pain Psychology Clinics, but only six can provide data.

- There were 485 new patients referred to pain psychology clinics between 1 January and 31 March 2018.
- Of the 258 patients who attended their first appointment in this quarter, 248 (96.1%) were seen within 18 weeks.
- Of the 443 who were still waiting for their first appointment as at 31 March 2018, 82 (18.5%) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks.
- 200 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. 38 (11.7%) patients did not attend their first appointment and did not notify the hospital.

All data relating to Chronic Pain Waiting Times are available in a spreadsheet.

Background
Waiting times for chronic pain services are monitored as part of the 18 weeks RTT standard. Pain services are part of a centralised service (usually with consultant led outpatient appointments) to which an individual is referred to a clinic for chronic pain assessment and management. The pain psychology service is provided for pain management led by psychological therapy specialists. The data presented here has been adjusted for periods of patient unavailability. Some referrals will not be accepted as the request to a healthcare professional or to an organisation to provide healthcare to a patient may not be appropriate. Data on return patients is not available as only two NHS Boards have a process in place to capture this information on their IT Systems. Return patient data are therefore not collected by ISD.

Please see News and Updates section of our website for more details.

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Further Information
The data from this publication is available to download from our web page along with a background information and glossary, and metadata document.

For more information on Chronic Pain see the Waiting Times section of our website.

An animation has been developed to explain how all waiting times are calculated in NHSScotland.

The next release of this publication will be September 2018.

ISD and 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. Further information about our statistics.