Information Services Division

Chronic Pain Waiting Times in NHSScotland

Quarter Ending 31 December 2018
Official Statistics publication for Scotland (Experimental)
Publication Date: 12 March 2019

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 December 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 01 October 2018 and 31 December 2018, there were 5,219 new patients referred to a pain clinic. This compares with 4,991 referrals in the previous quarter.
- Of the 2,809 patients who attended (were seen) for their first appointment between 01 October 2018 and 31 December 2018, 1,988 (70.8%) attended within 18 weeks of referral. This compares with 72.4% in the previous quarter.
- Of the 4,810 patients who were still waiting for their first appointment at 31 December 2018, 714 (14.8%) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks.
- NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Lothian, NHS Orkney, NHS Shetland and NHS Western Isles saw all their patients within 18 weeks.
- 1,480 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. 380 (12.3%) 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 December 2018, NHSScotland

Wait time band calculations found here.
Pain Psychology Clinics

Due to the developmental nature these data should be interpreted with caution. Ten NHS Boards provide Pain Psychology Clinics, but only seven can provide data.

• There were 540 new patients referred to pain psychology clinics between 01 October 2018 and 31 December 2018.
• Of the 313 patients who attended their first appointment in this quarter, 219 (70.0%) were seen within 18 weeks.
• Of the 673 who were still waiting for their first appointment as at 31 December 2018, 137 (20.4%) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks.
• 207 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. 47 (12.2%) patients did not attend their first appointment and did not notify the hospital.

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 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.

All data relating to Chronic Pain Waiting Times are available in a spreadsheet. The next release of this publication will be 11 June 2019.

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.