Inpatient, Day Case and Outpatient Stage of Treatment Waiting Times

Monthly and quarterly data to 31 March 2019

Publication date 28 May 2019
This is a National Statistics Publication

National Statistics status means that the official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. They are identified by the quality mark shown above.

They comply with the Code of Practice for statistics and are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority’s regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

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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.

There have been several changes in waiting time targets and standards over the last 20 years. The most recent change to waiting times came with the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011 which established a legal 12 weeks Treatment Time Guarantee (TTG) for eligible patients who are due to receive planned inpatient or day case treatment from 1 October 2012. The Act states that eligible patients must start to receive that treatment within 12 weeks (84 days) of the treatment being agreed. This guarantee is based on completed waits.

Further details on this and previous waiting time targets and standards can be found in the background information, with more detailed information in the History of Waiting Times and Waiting Lists.

Inpatient, Day case and Outpatient waiting times are vital components 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).

This publication is split into 2 main sections:

1. New Outpatients

This is patients added to the waiting list for their first appointment who are covered by the waiting time standards under ‘New Ways’. ISD currently do not collect information nationally on waiting times for return outpatients. Further details on ‘New Ways’ can be found in the background information.

2. Inpatients and Day cases

This section focuses on patients added to waiting list from 1 October 2012 covered by the TTG. Exceptions to TTG are set out in the Regulations. Further details on the TTG can be found in the background information.

ISD have changed the format of some of the charts included in this publication. No information has been removed and can still be found in the data tables. If you would like to provide any comments please contact the team via nss.isdwaitingtimes@NHS.net.
From May 2019, this publication now includes SMR01 (inpatient activity) and SMR00 (outpatient activity) unadjusted waiting times activity information. This is to show long term activity trends at health board level. This will complement the existing adjusted waiting times information already included in the publication. Due to data completeness, both the SMR01 and SMR00 data is only shown up to December 2018. See current data completeness levels for more information here.

**Main Points**

Due to technical issues with providing data from their Patient Management Systems (PMS), NHS Tayside have provided some locally sourced figures to inform this publication. ISD deem this information to be of sufficient quality to be included in this release. Once the technical issues are resolved by the Boards, ISD will refresh the figures. See data quality for further detail.

**New Outpatients at 31 March 2019**

- 75.0% of patients waiting for an appointment had been waiting 12 weeks or less. This compares with 70.0% at 31 December 2018 and 74.9% at 31 March 2018.
- Five NHS Boards were below the Scotland figure, with NHS Tayside (62.7%), NHS Grampian (64.9%) and NHS Lothian (65.1%) being the lowest.

**Inpatients and Day cases quarter ending 31 March 2019**

- 68.4% of patients were seen within the 12 week TTG. This compares with 72.9% during quarter ending 31 December 2018 and 75.6% during quarter ending 31 March 2018.
- Five NHS Boards were below the Scotland figure, with NHS Grampian (47.3%), NHS Highland (54.4%) and NHS Tayside (61.5%) being the lowest.
Results and Commentary

1. New Outpatients

This section covers all New Outpatients and statistics are derived from the ISD Waiting Times warehouse. Please note: NHS Tayside experienced technical problems with data submitted to the ISD Waiting Times warehouse. Locally derived figures have been supplied for this publication, which are included in the data tables.

The following waiting times information is on patients covered by the National Waiting Time Standard set by the Scottish Government.

As outlined in the Scottish Government’s Local Delivery Plan for NHSScotland, Boards were expected to improve their 12 week New Outpatient waiting time performance in 2015/16 to achieve a 95% standard with a stretch aim to 100%. This applies to all New Outpatient appointments from all sources of referral. In addition to this commitment, NHS Boards were working towards ensuring that there are no waits over 16 weeks.

All summary tables and charts within this section are supplemented by NHS Board trend and comparative detail [here](#).

1.1 Patients waiting at month end for a new outpatient appointment

Please see [Appendix 1](#) for more information on the differences between patients waiting (ongoing waits) and patients seen (completed waits).

At 31 March 2019, 75.0% of patients had been waiting 12 weeks or less. Five NHS Boards were below the Scotland figure; NHS Tayside (62.7%), NHS Grampian (64.9%) and NHS Lothian (65.1%) being the lowest.

The number of patients waiting over 12 weeks decreased to 78,920 at 31 March 2019 from 93,671 at 31 December 2018.
Table 1 - Ongoing waits for patients on Waiting List: New Outpatient appointment, NHSScotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month ending</th>
<th>Total waiting</th>
<th>Number waiting over 12 weeks</th>
<th>Number waiting over 16 weeks</th>
<th>Performance (% waiting 12 weeks or less)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-19</td>
<td>315,949</td>
<td>78,920</td>
<td>61,879</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Dec-18</td>
<td>312,524</td>
<td>93,671</td>
<td>66,903</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Sep-18</td>
<td>324,279</td>
<td>95,729</td>
<td>65,876</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Jun-18</td>
<td>320,110</td>
<td>79,855</td>
<td>54,052</td>
<td>75.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-18</td>
<td>304,130</td>
<td>76,460</td>
<td>58,751</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-17</td>
<td>295,420</td>
<td>57,296</td>
<td>42,077</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that over the last 12 months, the number of patients waiting over 16 weeks increased from 54,052 to 61,879. In March 2019, 78.4% of all patients waiting beyond the national standard of 12 weeks continued to wait beyond 16 weeks.

Chart 1 demonstrates that the total number on the list has increased since 2012, along with the number waiting over 12 weeks although both have levelled off over the past 18 months. There appear to be seasonal effects each year, with the number on list tending to remain stable between January and March, increase between April and September and decrease between October and December.

Chart 2 shows the performance trend over time. The performance has shown a decreasing trend since December 2012, although it has fluctuated from September 2017 to March 2019 between 70.0% and 75.0%.

Chart 1: New Outpatients waiting, total and over 12 weeks, NHSScotland

As at 31/03/2019:
- Total waiting: 315,949
- Of which, waited over 12 weeks: 78,920
1.2 Patients seen

NHS Tayside experienced technical problems with the submission of data to the ISD Waiting Times database and have provided locally derived figures for this indicator from April 2017 to December 2018.

Please see Appendix 1 for more information on the differences between patients waiting (ongoing waits) and patients seen (completed waits).

While the 12 week national standard applies to patients waiting, the number of patients seen shows the complete picture of waiting times experienced. Table 2 provides a quarterly breakdown for the number of patients seen. During quarter ending 31 March 2019, 74.7% of patients were seen within 12 weeks.

There has been a reduction in patients seen within 12 weeks performance over time. The number of patients seen who waited over 12 weeks increased since the previous quarter, from 86,918 in quarter ending 31 December 2018 to 93,197 in quarter ending 31 March 2019.

Half of all patients covered by the national standard were seen within 42 days (median wait) and 9 out of 10 were seen within 161 days (90th percentile wait) during quarter ending 31 March 2019.
Table 2 - Completed waits for patients seen: New Outpatient appointment, NHSScotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter ending</th>
<th>Total seen</th>
<th>Number who waited over 12 weeks</th>
<th>Number who waited over 16 weeks</th>
<th>Median Wait (days)</th>
<th>90th Percentile Wait (days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-19</td>
<td>367,875</td>
<td>93,197</td>
<td>66,582</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Dec-18</td>
<td>355,939</td>
<td>86,918</td>
<td>62,794</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Sep-18</td>
<td>343,176</td>
<td>83,516</td>
<td>58,172</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Jun-18</td>
<td>356,484</td>
<td>81,526</td>
<td>57,407</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-18</td>
<td>350,817</td>
<td>92,943</td>
<td>65,447</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-17</td>
<td>371,075</td>
<td>86,535</td>
<td>57,444</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to NHS Tayside’s technical issues, the median and 90th percentile wait has not been calculated for NHS Scotland from quarter ending June 2017 to December 2018.

Chart 3 shows that the number of patients seen who waited over 12 and 16 weeks is generally increasing over time.

**Chart 3: Number of New Outpatients who waited over 12 weeks, NHSScotland**

1.3 Patient unavailability at month end

Waiting times are adjusted to deduct periods where the patient is recorded as being unavailable either at the patient’s request (Patient Advised, Patient Requested), due to
medical reasons (Medical) or due to Patient Focused Booking (PFB) reasons. Further detail on the use of unavailability is explained here.

NHS Tayside experienced technical problems with the submission of data to the ISD Waiting Time database. It has not been possible for NHS Tayside to provide data for this indicator from April 2017 to December 2018. This indicator will be updated once the data are available.

1.7% (4,712) of the patients waiting for a New Outpatient appointment on 31 March 2019 were unavailable for treatment in NHSScotland (excluding NHS Tayside). This compares with 2.5% at 31 December 2018 for these 14 Health Boards.

Following the introduction of unavailability codes in October 2012, a detailed split of unavailability by NHS Board is available here.

1.4 Additions and removals from list
During the quarter ending 31 March 2019, there were 454,532 patients added to the waiting list and 455,701 were removed. As removals exceeded additions, the net effect is a 1,169 decrease in waiting list size.

The majority of patients were removed from the list because they attended an appointment.

1.5 Non-attendance rates
During quarter ending 31 March 2019, 470,365 offers for a new outpatient appointment were accepted.

In the most recent quarter, 5.8% of appointments were cancelled by the service. The patient Could Not Attend (CNA) rate was 7.6%. This is when a patient notifies the service in advance that they will be unable to attend the appointment.

For information on Did Not Attend (DNA) rates, patients who failed to notify the Hospital in advance of a non-attendance, please see Chart 2 in the Acute Activity publication. Please note however that these rates are calculated using a different cohort of patients and will include patients not covered by the national standard.
1.6 Distribution of Wait

This distribution of wait analysis provides a collective overview on how quickly the majority of patients are seen. Capturing the impact of the rules that underlie the calculation of wait, the distribution is shown for unadjusted and adjusted waits.

The unadjusted wait is the full waiting time experienced by the patient, from the date the referral is received to the date the patient is seen. The adjusted wait excludes any periods of unavailability, where the waiting time clock is paused, and takes into account any clock resets where reasonable and clinically appropriate to do so. Performance is measured against the adjusted wait.

Chart 4 illustrates length of wait in time bands of three weeks for quarter ending 31 March 2019. 31.5% of patients were seen within three weeks. Around three quarters of patients (74.7%) had an adjusted wait within 12 weeks in NHSScotland. The comparable figure for the unadjusted measure was 71.9%.

Chart 4: Distribution of (Adjusted) Wait, Quarter ending 31 March 2019, New Outpatient appointment*

1.7 Reducing New Outpatient Waiting Times

In October 2018, Scottish Government announced the Waiting Times Improvement Plan which focuses on reducing the length of time people are waiting for key areas of healthcare.

As NHS Boards make progress towards achieving the aims of the plan by Spring 2021, ISD will provide further explanation on the statistics that are presented quarterly.
It is important to look at long term trends when it comes to recognising sustained improvement in waiting times. This is due to normal variation for example seasonality and month on month variation. An example of this is the month of February, as it is more likely to have fewer working days than other months of the year.

Many Boards when seeking to reduce waiting times for patients will initially focus on patients who have been waiting the longest; this is known as the ‘tail’. Clinically urgent patients will always take priority for treatment within NHS Boards.

**Chart 5** illustrates this correlation between reducing the tail and improved performance for patients seen. The ongoing waits have been ‘shifted forward’ three months and we can see that the trend for completed waits then falls into a similar trend as the ongoing waits after this time period. This suggests it takes three months to start seeing a change in completed waits performance reflected in ongoing waits performance.

**Chart 5: Percentage of New Outpatients seen and waiting within 12 weeks (with ongoing waits ‘shifted forward’ three months), NHS Scotland**
2. Inpatient and Day cases

This section focuses on patients added to Inpatient and Day case admission waiting lists from 1 October 2012. The Treatment Time Guarantee (TTG) states that from 1 October 2012, no patient covered by the guarantee should wait longer than 12 weeks (84 days) for planned Inpatient or Day case admission.

NHS Tayside experienced technical problems with the submission of data to the ISD Waiting Times database. This information will be updated when the data are available. Locally derived figures have been supplied for this publication, which are included in the data tables.

All summary tables and charts within this section are supplemented by NHS Board trends and additional comparative detail here.

2.1 Patients seen

Please see Appendix 1 for more information on the differences between patients waiting (ongoing waits) and patients seen (completed waits).

Table 3 shows the number of patients admitted for Inpatient or Day case treatment. During quarter ending 31 March 2019, 50,348 (68.4%) of patients seen waited within the TTG of 12 weeks, with a remaining 23,229 patients who waited over 12 weeks. Five NHS Boards were below the Scotland figure, with NHS Grampian (47.3%), NHS Highland (54.4%) and NHS Tayside (61.5%) being the lowest.

Half of all patients covered by the national standard were seen within 59 days (median wait) and 9 out of 10 were seen within 173 days (90th percentile wait) during the most recent quarter. Waits from NHS Tayside are not included in the median and 90th percentile waits.
Table 3 – Completed waits for patients seen: Inpatient or Day case admission, NHSScotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter ending</th>
<th>Total seen</th>
<th>Number who waited over 12 weeks</th>
<th>Performance (%)</th>
<th>Median Wait (days)</th>
<th>90th Percentile Wait (days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-19</td>
<td>73,577</td>
<td>23,229</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Dec-18</td>
<td>69,083</td>
<td>18,705</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Sep-18</td>
<td>68,090</td>
<td>17,781</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Jun-18</td>
<td>71,738</td>
<td>18,315</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-18</td>
<td>68,775</td>
<td>16,778</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-17</td>
<td>74,581</td>
<td>13,317</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* NHS Tayside have been excluded from the median and 90th percentile waits to allow comparisons between all quarters in Table 3. Consequently, these figures should be interpreted with caution.

Chart 6 shows that the number of inpatients and day cases seen has decreased since 2014, while the number who waited over 12 weeks has increased, increasing by 4,524 since 31 December 2018. Since the introduction of TTG in October 2012, 212,867 patients have experienced a wait over 12 weeks and 1,766,311 have been treated within 12 weeks. The majority of those waiting over 12 weeks were seen in NHS Lothian (37,826), NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde (37,673) and NHS Grampian (30,386).

Chart 7 demonstrates quarterly performance for Inpatients and Day cases.

Chart 6 - Number of inpatients and day cases seen and number who waited over 12 weeks, NHSScotland.
2.2 Patients waiting at month end

Please see Appendix 1 for more information on the differences between patients waiting (ongoing waits) and patients seen (completed waits).

While the 12 week TTG applies to patients seen, the number of patients waiting for treatment at a point in time is a key measure in assessing performance. Table 4 shows the number of patients waiting at month end. On 31 March 2019, 70.1% of patients’ ongoing waits for treatment (54,691 out of a total of 78,002) were within 12 weeks. This compares with 67.5% on 31 December 2018.

Table 4 - Ongoing waits for patients on Waiting List: Inpatient or Day case admission, NHSScotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month ending</th>
<th>Total waiting</th>
<th>Number waiting over 12 weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-19</td>
<td>78,002</td>
<td>23,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Dec-18</td>
<td>78,418</td>
<td>25,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Sep-18</td>
<td>74,932</td>
<td>23,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Jun-18</td>
<td>73,260</td>
<td>21,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-18</td>
<td>72,470</td>
<td>20,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-17</td>
<td>64,197</td>
<td>10,864</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 8 demonstrates the number of patients waiting beyond 12 weeks since the inception of TTG, with the total waiting list to give context. It shows an increase in patients waiting over 12
weeks over time, with a greater rate of increase from March 2016 onwards although there has been a slight decrease in the most recent quarter.

**Chart 8 – Number of Ongoing Waits over 12 weeks; Inpatient or Day case Admission; NHSScotland**

2.3 Patient unavailability at month end

Waiting times are adjusted to deduct periods where the patient is recorded as being unavailable either at the patients request (Patient Advised, Patient Requested) or due to medical reasons (Medical). Further detail on the use of unavailability is explained [here](#).

**NHSScotland** experienced technical problems with the submission of data to the ISD Waiting Times database. NHS Tayside was unable to provide any figures between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2018.

Across NHSScotland (excluding NHS Tayside), 4,555 patients waiting for an Inpatient or Day case admission on 31 March 2019 were unavailable. This is 6.5% of the total waiting list, a decrease from 6.8% for these boards on 31 March 2018.

On 31 March 2019, the highest rate of unavailability in Scotland was reported by NHS Shetland (28.6%) which is largely due to patient advised unavailability for personal commitments. NHS Borders (18.7%), NHS Orkney (13.1%) and NHS Dumfries & Galloway (10.1%) also displayed relatively high rates of unavailability.

Following the introduction of unavailability codes in October 2012, a detailed split of unavailability by NHS Board is available [here](#).
2.4 Additions and Removals from list.

During the quarter ending 31 March 2019, there were 88,822 additions to the Inpatient or Day case waiting list and 89,625 removals across NHSScotland. This is a net decrease of 803 on the waiting list.

The majority of patients were removed from the list because they were admitted.

2.5 Non-Attendance Rates

During quarter ending 31 March 2019, 91,051 offers for Inpatient or Day case admission were accepted across NHSScotland.

During the most recent quarter, the Could Not Attend (CNA) rate was 6.7%. This is when a patient notifies the service in advance that they will be unable to attend the appointment. The Did Not Attend (DNA) rate was 1.1%.

For information on Cancellation by Service rates, please see the monthly publication of Cancelled Planned Operations. Please note that these rates are calculated using a different cohort of patients and will include patients not covered by TTG.

2.6 Distribution of Wait

The distribution of wait analysis provides a collective overview on how quickly the majority of patients are seen. Capturing the impact of the rules that underlie the calculation of wait, the distribution is shown for unadjusted and adjusted waits.

The unadjusted wait is the full waiting time experienced by the patient, from the date treatment is agreed to the date the patient is seen. The adjusted wait excludes any periods of unavailability, where the waiting time clock is paused, and takes into account any clock resets where reasonable and clinically appropriate to do so. Performance is measured against the adjusted wait.

Chart 9 illustrates length of wait in time bands of 3 weeks for quarter ending 31 March 2018. Around one in four patients (24.5%) waited less than three weeks and 68.4% of patients had an adjusted wait within 12 weeks across NHSScotland. The comparable figure for the unadjusted measure was 63.1% across NHSScotland.
2.7 Patients not covered by TTG

The majority of patients waiting for an Inpatient or Day case admission are covered by TTG. However, patients who have had a diagnostic test in an Inpatient or Day case setting before a decision was made to treat are not subject to the TTG. The other exemptions, set out in the Regulations are:

- assisted reproduction;
- obstetrics services; and
- organ, tissue or cell transplantation whether from living or deceased donor.

Spinal treatment by injection or surgical intervention was excluded from TTG until 1 April 2014, and designated national specialist services for surgical intervention of spinal scoliosis was excluded until 1 October 2014. They have been included in the TTG reporting from these dates.

ISD collect information on waiting times for various aspects of healthcare provided by NHSScotland. Submission of data relating to patients not covered by the guarantee is not mandatory and as such the volume of data submitted can vary significantly from Board to Board. The figures below are therefore not comparable across Scotland and as such should be interpreted accordingly.

At 31 March 2019, 114,397 patients were waiting for planned Inpatient or Day case admission, of which 78,002 were covered by the TTG.
Please note the vast majority of the patients who are not covered under TTG, are waiting for admission for a Diagnostic Test. These patients require a diagnostic test before a decision can be made to treat. In a small number of cases it may be clinically appropriate to undertake the diagnostic procedure and treatment at the same time. At the point the decision is made to treat, these patients are then covered by the TTG. More information on Diagnostic Waiting times is available here.

2.8 Reducing Inpatient and Day Case Waiting Times

In October 2018, Scottish Government announced the Waiting Times Improvement Plan which focuses on reducing the length of time people are waiting for key areas of healthcare.

As NHS Boards make progress towards achieving the aims of the plan by Spring 2021, ISD will provide further explanation on the statistics that are presented quarterly.

It is important to look at long term trends when it comes to recognising sustained improvement in waiting times. This is due to normal variation for example seasonality and month on month variation. An example of this is the month of February, as it is more likely to have fewer working days than other months of the year.

Many Boards when seeking to reduce waiting times for patients will initially focus on patients who have been waiting the longest; this is known as the ‘tail’. Clinically urgent patients will always take priority for treatment within NHS Boards.

Chart 10 illustrates this correlation between reducing the tail and improved performance for patients seen. The ongoing waits have been ‘shifted forward’ six months and we can see that the trend for completed waits then falls into a similar trend as the ongoing waits after this time period. This suggests it takes six months to start seeing a change in completed waits performance reflected in ongoing waits performance.
Chart 10: Percentage of Inpatients and Daycases seen and waiting within 12 weeks (with ongoing waits ‘shifted forward’ six months), NHS Scotland
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File name</th>
<th>File and size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Outpatient appointment: Waiting Times and Activity, NHSScotland</td>
<td>Excel 1,273 Kb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inpatient and Day case admission: Waiting Times and Activity, NHSScotland</td>
<td>Excel 1,296 Kb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Further Information

Further Information can be found on the ISD website.
The next release of this publication will be August 2019.

Rate this publication

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Background Information

Waiting Times - History and Performance Indicators

Inpatient and Day case Target & Standards

From the 1 October 2012, the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011 establishes a 12 week maximum waiting times for the treatment of all eligible patients who are due to receive planned treatment delivered on an inpatient or day case basis (known as Treatment Time Guarantee).

Previously, the national waiting time standard stated that, from 31 March 2011, no patient waiting for treatment as an inpatient or day case would wait longer than 9 weeks. Prior to this, the national standard was set at 18 weeks (from 31 December 2007), 15 weeks (from 31 March 2009), 12 weeks (from 31 March 2010) and 9 weeks (from 31 March 2011).

Prior to 1 October 2012, the specialties of Mental Health, Obstetrics and Homeopathy were excluded from the Inpatient, Day case and New Outpatient waiting time standards. Homeopathy and Mental Health Inpatients and Day cases are now included under TTG and NHS Boards are working on providing this information, which is currently collected on different IT systems that are not yet able to supply waiting times information centrally. All NHS Boards have given the Scottish Government assurances that mental health patients are being treated within the TTG.

New Outpatient Standards

The national waiting time standard states that, from 31 March 2010, no patient should wait longer than 12 weeks for a new outpatient appointment at a consultant-led clinic. This includes referrals from all sources. Previously, the national standard was set at 18 weeks (from 31 December 2007) and 15 weeks (from 31 March 2009) and applied only to patients referred by a GP or dentist.

NHS Boards were expected to improve the 12 week outpatient waiting times performance during 2015/16 to achieve a 95% standard with a stretch aim to 100%, which applies to all sources of referral for first New Outpatient appointment. In addition, ISD monitor waits over 16 weeks which are considered by the Scottish Government to be ‘longstops’.

ISD began collecting data based on ‘New Ways of measuring waiting times’ in January 2008. At that time, data quality focused on referrals from GPs or dentists, reflecting the national standard at that time. More recently data quality checks have encompassed all sources of referral and ISD now publish data covering all sources of referral, reflecting the new national standard, from quarter ending 31 March 2010.
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While statistics for New Outpatient waits have continued to be sourced from the ISD Waiting Times Warehouse using patient level data, following approval from Scottish Government and NHS Boards, the opportunity has been taken to bring the calculation of wait in line with the calculation for Inpatients and Day cases to make them consistent with the guidance on TTG and ensure consistency across Stage of Treatment waits. This may result in an increase in average length of wait and therefore potentially, an increase in the number of waits beyond 12 weeks.

Changes to the calculation include the clock not being reset where:

- **It is not reasonable and clinically appropriate to do so i.e. a patient whose circumstances are considered clinically urgent**;
- **A patient rejects 2 or more reasonable offers (known as a reasonable offer package), having already waited 84 days**;
- **A patient fails to attend an appointment they have agreed to attend, having already waited 84 days**.

Outpatient statistics for quarters prior to April 2014 are subject to the old calculation therefore this change will impact on the comparability of outpatients waiting times statistics over time.

**Other Waiting Times Targets & Standards**

Inpatient, Day case and Outpatient Stage of Treatment Waiting Times is part of a variety of targets and standards set by the Scottish Government around waiting times. Details on each of the targets/standards that ISD publish are available within the [Supporting Documentation](#) web pages.

**Why are there different measurements of waiting times?**

Waiting times statistics are of public and 'management' interest for measuring among other things how well the health system is performing and prompting management action where pressures on the standard of service required by the public are apparent. The targets have changed significantly over the last 25 years and are shown in Table A1. There are two statistics of interest in this regard for assessing NHS hospitals' performance:

- **Patients waiting (Ongoing waits)** – refers to patients who are on the waiting list at a point in time (waiting list census) e.g. 28 February 2019 and they have not yet had their appointment/been admitted or received treatment.
- **Patients seen** – refer to patients who have attended their appointment/been admitted/received treatment and are subsequently taken off the waiting list.
Patients waiting

These statistics measured at a census point show the length of time that patients on a waiting list have been 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 national maximum waiting time standard set by the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government use information on Patients Waiting to performance manage waiting time standards, and these statistics have played an important intelligence role in the significant reductions seen in waiting times over the last few years.

This measure however, does not report how long patients actually waited until they received care. If a census is repeated as a routine, then the maximum extra time the waiting patients may experience who are removed from the waiting list between censuses, is the time gap between censuses. Currently at national reporting level that is one month.

Another gap in the picture provided by this measure is the patients who are added to a waiting list after one census point and treated (removed from the list) before the next census point. This is not generally an issue for prospective performance management action.

Patients seen

These statistics show the complete picture of waiting time experienced by patients. It is a good retrospective measure of how well the NHS is performing against the target or standard. It also takes account of the gaps in the census measure described above. This is a much easier measure for the general public to understand.

It is not so useful for prospective management action as it is historic but it may indicate issues to managers for future planning. For example where waiting list management processes might need adjustment to deal with long waiters in order to prevent them missing the target between census points.

Patient unavailability

Waiting times are adjusted to deduct periods where the patient is recorded as being unavailable for Patient Advised, Patient Requested, Medical or Patient Focused Booking (PFB) reasons.

- If a patient informs the hospital that they will be unable to accept an appointment because, for example, they are on holiday for a fortnight, then the patient is recorded as being unavailable for patient advised reasons and their waiting time clock is paused. This was previously recorded as Social unavailability;
- From 1 April 2014, patients who request a specific consultant or a specific location will have a period of Patient Requested unavailability applied. Prior to this, these were recorded as Patient Advised unavailability;
• If a patient is medically unable to undergo a procedure i.e. they have another medical issue such as raised blood pressure that makes treatment inadvisable then the patient is recorded as being unavailable for medical reasons and their waiting time clock is paused;
• PFB is where the patient is invited to contact the hospital to make an appointment or to confirm an offered appointment date. The patient should be allowed a minimum of 7 days to respond. If no contact has been made after 7 days, the patient's waiting time clock may be paused for a maximum of 7 days. After a second offer, if no contact has been made after 7 days, the patient's waiting time clock may be paused a second time for a maximum of 7 days. PFB is applicable to New Outpatients and Diagnostics only.

New Ways

In January 2008, the ‘New Ways’ of defining and measuring waiting times in the NHS in Scotland was introduced, scrapping the use of availability status codes. The waiting time targets and standards were based on ongoing waits i.e. patients waiting for treatment. Table A1 shows the targets associated with ‘New Ways’. Further information is available in The History of Waiting Times and Waiting Lists document or on the Scottish Government website at Scotland Performs.

ISD collect information on waiting times for various aspects of healthcare provided by NHS Scotland, including new outpatient attendances led by a consultant or dentist. Data is collected for acute specialties (those specialties primarily concerned in the surgical, medical and dental sectors) and waiting times statistics are mostly reported on patients covered by the Scottish Government’s national waiting time standard; Scottish residents waiting to be seen in an acute specialty (other than homeopathy).

Treatment Time Guarantee

In 2011, the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011 established a legal 12 weeks Treatment Time Guarantee (TTG) for eligible patients who are due to receive planned inpatient or day case treatment from 1 October 2012. Eligible patients must start to receive that treatment within 12 weeks (84 days) of the treatment being agreed. This target is based on completed waits i.e. patients seen.

These statistics published cover all patients added to inpatient and day case admission (IPDC) waiting lists from 1 October 2012. NHS Boards have made changes to their local system extracts in order to provide the additional data to ISD; while ISD have developed the waiting times warehouse to capture the additional data.

This target also includes Mental Health inpatients and day cases. However, these patients are not included in this publication. The Scottish Government is seeking assurance from NHS Board Chief Executives that no Mental Health inpatient or day case has breached 12 weeks. In addition Scottish Government and NHS Boards have also agreed to use the same method of calculation of wait for new outpatients as applies to inpatient and day cases under the TTG. A further change that affects outpatients as well as inpatients and day cases is around
Information Services Division

unavailability. From 1 October 2012, ‘Patient advised unavailability’ replaced ‘Social unavailability’ which puts the patient in control of their own wait. Further information on the Treatment Time Guarantee can be found in The History of Waiting Times and Waiting Lists, which includes links to all the supporting documents.

Table A1 – Summary of NHS Scotland Waiting Time Targets from 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Date</th>
<th>Referral to Treatment</th>
<th>Diagnostic</th>
<th>Stage of Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Apr 1997</td>
<td>12 months IPDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec 2003</td>
<td>9 months IPDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec 2005</td>
<td>6 months IPDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec 2007</td>
<td>9 weeks</td>
<td>18 weeks OP/IPDC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**January 2008 – New Ways**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Date</th>
<th>Referral to Treatment</th>
<th>Diagnostic</th>
<th>Stage of Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Mar 2009</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 weeks OP/IP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Mar 2010</td>
<td>4 weeks (^1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 weeks OP/IP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**April 2010 – New Ways Refresh**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Date</th>
<th>Referral to Treatment</th>
<th>Diagnostic</th>
<th>Stage of Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec 2011</td>
<td>18 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**August 2012 – Waiting Time Guidance updated to incorporate Treatment Time Guarantee \(^2\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Date</th>
<th>Referral to Treatment</th>
<th>Diagnostic</th>
<th>Stage of Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 weeks IPDC (^3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. This is a local target; the national target remains 6 weeks.
2. This is a legal guarantee.
3. There is an agreement between NHS Boards and Scottish Government to manage Outpatients under the same guidance.
Appendix 2 – Data Quality

NHS Tayside implemented a new PAS (TrakCare) on 23rd June 2017. Due to technical issues, there is a delay in providing ISD with data. Most figures included in this publication covering from June 2017 to December 2018 have been provided directly from NHS Tayside PAS rather than the Waiting Times data mart.

NHS Lothian have identified issues with outpatient data submitted to ISD from Edinburgh Dental Institute. A combination of system and user issues has resulted in an understatement of the number of patients waiting and incorrect reporting of lengths of wait. Given these concerns records received from the Institute have been excluded from this publication. Local data sources indicate that, in early May 2019, approximately 5,500 patients were waiting under the General Outpatient Standard, 2,500 of which were over 12 weeks. NHS Lothian are working with ISD to re-establish the inclusion of Dental Institute data in future publications.

Detail on specific data quality issues experienced by Boards can be found on the dedicated webpage. Details of records which have been 'filtered' by Boards can also be found at this location.
## Appendix 3 – Publication Metadata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metadata Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication title</strong></td>
<td>Inpatient, Day case and Outpatient Stage of Treatment Waiting Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Monthly and quarterly summary of waiting times and waiting lists in the acute sector of NHS Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td>Health and Social Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic</strong></td>
<td>Access and Waiting Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td>Excel workbooks and PDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data source(s)</strong></td>
<td>Waiting Times Data Warehouse. Consists of a series of ‘open’ records for patients still waiting for treatment and ‘closed’ records when patients are removed from the waiting list. All patients who are added to a waiting list for inpatient or day case treatment, for a new outpatient appointment at a consultant or dentist-led clinic or for a return outpatient appointment where a procedure is expected to be carried out should be included. Homeopathy, mental health and obstetrics specialties are not included. Data from 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2014, for Inpatient and Day case admissions was sourced via aggregate returns from NHS Boards. NHS Boards local systems have since been modified to comply with TTG, and data from 1 April 2014 is sourced from the warehouse again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date that data are acquired</strong></td>
<td>Deadline for data submission is the 28th each month prior to the publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Release date</strong></td>
<td>The last Tuesday of the month for each publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>Quarterly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeframe of data and timeliness</strong></td>
<td>Data from 1 January 2008 to date. There have been no delays in reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuity of data</strong></td>
<td>Since 1992, there have been several significant changes in waiting times. Prior to 2008, data was derived using different rules that are not comparable with New Ways. From February 2010 publication ISD have implemented the ‘Refresh Project’, the key aim of which was to increase the usefulness of the New Ways Warehouse to NHS Boards, ISD and to the Scottish Government. Then from 1 October 2012, the introduction of Treatment Time Guarantee resulted in further changes. A full history of waiting times is available in Waiting Times &amp; Waiting List History.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revisions statement</strong></td>
<td>Process and background regarding the revision of data from October</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Revisions relevant to this publication

2012 is detailed [here](#).

All figures from October 2012 have been revised. Addressing a period of transition between October 2012 and March 2014, this ensures all figures are sourced from the ISD warehouse and the calculation of wait (applicable from 1 October 2012) is applied consistently to Inpatients, Day cases and New Outpatients.

### Concepts and definitions

New Ways Definitional Rules and Guidance is available: [New Ways Rules & Guidance](#)

TTG rules and guidance is available in the following documents:

- [Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011](#)
- The Regulations and Directions under the Act - [CEL 17 (2012)](#)
- The Regulations (Amended) under the Act - [Amendment Regulations (2014)](#)
- Updated version of the NHSScotland Waiting Time Guidance – [CEL 33 (2012)](#)

### 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 including from 1 October 2012, Treatment Time Guarantee.

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 NHS Boards; health intelligence work; parliamentary questions and NHS Performs.

### Accuracy

Detailed information on [validation](#) is available.

The data is subject to a sign-off procedure each quarter before publication where the data for the previous quarter is confirmed by the submitting Board.

ISD carry out detailed fitness for publication evaluation every quarter including comparisons to previous figures and expected trends. ISD also check outputs from two different analytical tools.

ISD carried out a project in 2009 to quantify and understand the differences between New Ways and other ISD data sources (SMR00, SMR01 and ISD(S)1).

ISD carried out an audit of New Ways data quality in 2008 and the...
<p>| <strong>Completeness</strong> | ISD carried out a project in 2009 to quantify and understand the differences between New Ways and other ISD data sources (SMR00, SMR01 and ISD(S)1). Provisional analysis of refresh data showed that approximately 98% of data submitted to the Warehouse is published. |
| <strong>Comparability</strong> | ISD carried out a project in 2009 to quantify and understand the differences between New Ways and other ISD data sources (SMR00, SMR01 and ISD(S)1). 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 are currently underway by the UK Comparative Waiting Times Group. Collaborative efforts are also underway to produce comparisons to European waiting times. |
| <strong>Accessibility</strong> | It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines. |
| <strong>Coherence and clarity</strong> | 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. Further features to aid clarity: 1. Attendances and performance data by Patient Type are available in separate tables to enable users to select a single measure for analysis. 2. All tables are printer friendly. 3. All Scotland summary data are presented first, with the option to view spreadsheets down to Board level. 4. Key data presented graphically. |
| <strong>Value type and unit of measurement</strong> | Number of patients seen, number of patients waiting and percentage distribution of wait; by NHS Board and nationally and by patient type (i.e. inpatients/day cases, new outpatients and return outpatients). |
| <strong>Disclosure</strong> | The ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol is followed. |
| <strong>Official Statistics designation</strong> | National Statistics. |
| <strong>UK Statistics Authority</strong> | Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published |</p>
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<td><strong>Last published</strong></td>
<td>26 February 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Next published</strong></td>
<td>August 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date of first publication</strong></td>
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Appendix 4 – Early access details

Pre-Release Access

Under terms of the "Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008", ISD is 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.

Standard Pre-Release Access:
Scottish Government Health Department
NHS Board Chief Executives
NHS Board Communication leads
Appendix 5 – 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](#).