Chronic Pain Waiting Times in NHSScotland

Quarter Ending 31 March 2019

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About this release
This release by Information Services Division (ISD) shows the length of time new patients waited for a first appointment at NHS chronic pain and pain psychology clinics. Information is shown by NHS Board for quarter ending 31 March 2019. 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
All NHS Boards offer pain clinics 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.

- The number of new patients referred to Chronic Pain clinics has remained level. Between 01 January 2019 and 31 March 2019, there were 5,249 new patients referred to a pain clinic, compared to 5,219 referrals in the previous quarter.

- Of the 3,227 patients who attended (were seen) for their first appointment, 2,059 (63.8%) attended within 18 weeks of referral. This compares with 70.8% the previous quarter.

- Of the 4,742 patients who were still waiting for their first appointment at 31 March 2019, 653 (13.8%) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks.

- There is variation between different NHS boards as to how long patients waited for their first appointment at Chronic Pain clinics. No patient waited more than 18 weeks in NHS Fife, NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Lothian, NHS Orkney, NHS Shetland and NHS Western Isles.

- 1,716 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. Of these, 387 (11.3%) patients were removed as they 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 2019, NHSScotland
Pain Psychology Clinics

Due to variable quality of these data, they should be interpreted with caution. Nine NHS Boards provide Pain Psychology Clinics, but only six can provide data. NHS Grampian have suspended their pain psychology service, whilst they recruit a Psychologist.

- There were 640 new patients referred to pain psychology clinics between 01 January 2019 and 31 March 2019.
- Of the 426 patients who attended their first appointment in this quarter, around 60% (254) were seen within 18 weeks.
- Of the 619 who were still waiting for their first appointment as at 31 March 2019, around 17% (102) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks.
- 248 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. 71 (13.4%) 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 or Psychologist led outpatient appointments) to which an individual is referred to a clinic for chronic pain assessment and management. 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. All data relating to Chronic Pain Waiting Times are available in a spreadsheet. The next release of this publication will be 10 September 2019.