Chronic Pain Waiting Times in NHSScotland

Quarter Ending 31 December 2019
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 December 2019. These data are considered experimental and should be used with caution as there are data quality issues and data from some Pain Psychology Clinics are incomplete.

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. Between 01 October 2019 and 31 December 2019:

- The number of new patients referred to Chronic Pain clinics has increased slightly. There were 5,184 new patients referred to a pain clinic, compared to 5,102 referrals in the previous quarter.
- Of the 3,154 patients who were seen for their first appointment, 1,908 (60.5%) attended within 18 weeks of referral. This compares with 62.8% in the previous quarter.
- Of the 4,769 patients who were still waiting for their first appointment at 31 December 2019, 1,053 (22.1%) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks. This compares with 5,326 patients waiting at the end of the previous quarter, of whom 19.9% had been waiting over 18 weeks.
- There is variation between 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 Borders, NHS Dumfries & Galloway, NHS Fife, NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Orkney, and NHS Shetland.
- 1,865 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. This represents 35% of patients who were waiting at the start of the quarter. Patients can be removed from the waiting list for a variety of reasons including inappropriate referral or because treatment is no longer required.
Pain Psychology Clinics

Ten NHS Boards provide Pain Psychology Clinics. The three island Boards do not currently provide clinics within their Board area and NHS Grampian have suspended their pain psychology service, whilst they recruit a Psychologist. Of the ten Boards who provide clinics, seven Boards provide a submission but three Boards, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, NHS Highland and NHS Tayside are not yet able to submit the full dataset required.

- The number of new patients referred to Pain Psychology clinics has increased. There were 586 new patients referred to pain psychology clinics compared to 529 referrals in the previous quarter.
- Of the 292 patients who were seen for their first appointment, 221 (75.7%) attended within 18 weeks of referral. This compares with 82.6% in the previous quarter.
- Of the 700 who were still waiting for their first appointment as at 31 December 2019, 182 (26%) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks. This compares with 582 patients waiting at the end of the previous quarter, of whom 18.7% had been waiting over 18 weeks.
- 172 patients were removed from a waiting list for reasons other than being seen. This represents 26% of patients who were waiting at the start of the quarter. Patients can be removed from the waiting list for a variety of reasons including inappropriate referral or because treatment is no longer required.

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 have been adjusted for periods of patient unavailability.

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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 09 June 2020.

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 Statistics. Further information about our statistics.