Allied Health Professionals –
Musculoskeletal Waiting Times in NHS
Scotland
Quarter ending 31 December 2019

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About this release
This release by Information Services Division gives a quarterly update on how long patients wait for Musculoskeletal (MSK) services that are delivered by Allied Health Professionals (AHP) in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Chiropody/Podiatry and Orthotics. The release also includes information on patients using the Musculoskeletal Advice and Triage Service (MATS) operated by NHS24. These data are considered developmental and progress continues to be made with all NHS Boards who are developing their IT systems in order to provide data for all indicators.

Main Points
• 45.4% of the 83,828 patients who had a first clinical outpatient appointment with an AHP MSK service were seen within four weeks of referral for quarter ending 31 December 2019, compared with the national target of 90%. This compares to 44.4% of patients seen within four weeks for the previous quarter and 46.4% of patients seen within four weeks for quarter ending 31 December 2018.

Percentage of patients seen within four weeks for quarters December 2018 – December 2019
There were 105,311 referrals to AHP MSK services in this quarter. This compares to 116,609 referrals during quarter ending 30 September 2019 and 109,450 referrals during quarter ending 31 December 2018.

At 31 December 2019, 31.3 % of the 68,158 patients waiting for a first clinical appointment with an AHP MSK service had been waiting four weeks or less. This compares to 37.9% at quarter ending 30 September 2019 and 34.6% at end 31 December 2018.

Background
MSK problems include a diversity of complaints and diseases localised in joints, bones, cartilage, ligaments, tendons, tendon sheaths, bursa and muscles. The episodes covered by this publication also include patients seen pre or post orthopaedic surgery and those with peripheral nerve lesions (e.g. carpal tunnel, sciatica) or complication of fracture/dislocation/trauma.

The Scottish Government has determined that at least 90% of AHP MSK patients should wait no longer than four weeks from receipt of referral from a patient or health or social care professional. See NHSScotland Waiting Times Guidance for more information. The guidance target should be met by each profession individually within each NHS Board.

AHP MSK Occupational Therapy is provided within the overall Occupational Therapy Service in seven of the 14 NHS Boards and it is not possible to separately identify only the MSK cases.

To inform this release 12 Boards provided information through the national data collection, while two boards (NHS Fife and NHS Tayside) provided data through a combination of the national data collection system and local figures. Further information regarding NHS boards submitting data is available. Board and specialty composition varies across quarters prior to quarter end December 2018.

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Further Information
Find out more in the full report. The data from this publication is available to download from our web page and the NHSScotland Open Data platform. For more information on AHP MSK see the waiting times section of our website. For related topics, please see the waiting times information page. ISD have developed a video, with further explanations of how waiting times are calculated. The next release of this publication will be 16 June 2020.

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