Hospital Waiting Times

New Outpatients, Inpatients & Day Cases

A National Statistics release for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland relates to the waits patients experience waiting to be seen as a new outpatient or waiting to be treated as either an inpatient or day cases. These waits are covered by national standards covering these stages of treatment. The link below provides access to a more detailed report summarising the statistics release:

Stage of Treatment – waiting to be seen as an Inpatient, Day Case or New Outpatient

Main Points

It should be highlighted that the statistics released for this reporting period are affected in part by the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. In particular, on the 17 March, NHS Scotland was placed under emergency measures and Boards were asked to suspend all non-urgent elective treatment. Later on the 23 March the nation entered a period of ‘lockdown’. These measures affected normal referral and treatment patterns, with less referrals to services as well as less patients seen in the latter weeks of March.

Treatment Time Guarantee (TTG) – Following the decision to treat all eligible patients should wait no longer than 12 weeks for treatment as an inpatient or day case.

- In the quarter ending 31 March 2020 there were 4,663 (-6.7%) fewer TTG-eligible patients admitted as an inpatient or day case compared to the previous quarter ending 31 December. There was a large reduction in admissions in the month of March itself. There were 16,561 patients admitted during March 2020 compared to 26,033 during March 2019.

- Of those admitted in the quarter ending 31 March 2020, 68.7% were treated within 12 weeks. This compares with 71.8% of patients admitted during the quarter ending 31 December 2019 and 68.6% of those admitted during the quarter ending 31 March 2019.

- At 31 March 2020 there were 79,973 patients waiting to be treated under this standard. Although less patients were admitted in March, there were also less additions to the waiting lists in the month due to a reduction in referrals. This led to a slight reduction in the number of patients waiting (403, -0.5%) compared to the number waiting at the end of the previous quarter and 191 (-0.2%) less than at the end of February. Of these patients, 28,464 had been waiting over 12 weeks.

- Due to the reduction in additions in the latter weeks of March, the percentage of patients who had been waiting three weeks or less at the end of the month was less than usual: 14.0% compared to 25.1% of those waiting at the end of February. The percentage of patients who had been waiting no more than 12 weeks was also less: 64.4% compared to 67.5% of patients waiting on 31 December 2019 and 70.8% of those waiting on 31 March 2019.

New outpatients National Standard - 95% of new outpatients waiting no longer than 12 weeks from referral to being seen.

- In the quarter ending 31 March 2020 there were 39,261 (-10.8%) fewer patients seen under this standard compared to the previous quarter ending 31 December. This is largely due to a reduction in patients seen in the month of March itself: there were 89,293 patients seen in March. This compares to 128,680 in March 2019 (-29%).
• Of those patients seen in the quarter ending 31 March 2020, 77.4% were seen within 12 weeks of referral. This compares with 76.7% of patients seen during the quarter ending 30 December 2019 and 74.9% during the quarter ending 31 March 2019.

• At 31 March 2020 there were 258,255 patients waiting to be seen: 22,418 (-8.0%) less than the number that were waiting at the end of the previous quarter and 11,560 (-4.3%) less than were waiting at the end of February. Although there were fewer patients seen in March, additions to the waiting list were reduced by a decrease in referrals. The reduction in the number waiting was due to the number patients seen or removed from lists exceeding the number of additions. There were 102,685 patients added to waiting lists in March compared to 137,962 additions in February: a 25.6% reduction.

• Of those waiting to be seen at 31 March 2020, 64,751 had been waiting over 12 weeks and 49,155 over 16 weeks.

• Due to a reduction in referrals in the latter weeks of March, the percentage of patients who had been waiting 3 weeks or less at the end of the month was less than usual: 20.4% compared to 32.4% at the end of February. Despite this, the percentage of patients who had been waiting no more than 12 weeks at the end of March was 74.9%. This compares with 73.2% on 31 December 2019 and 74.7% on the 31 March 2019.

*Please note the y axis does not start at zero

**Background**

Documents relating to waiting times, including the Treatment Time Guarantee are:

- The Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011.
- The Regulations and Directions under the Act - CEL 17 (2012).
- The Regulations (Amended) under the Act - Amendment Regulations (2014)
- The Directions under the Act – Directions (2019)

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Further Information

For more information see the Waiting Times section of our website. ISD have developed an animation, with further explanations of how waiting times are calculated.

The next release of this publication will be in August 2020.

NHS Performs

A selection of information from this publication is included in NHS Performs. NHS Performs is a website that brings together a range of information on how hospitals and NHS Boards within NHSScotland are performing.

PHS and Official Statistics

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS 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.