Psychological Therapies Waiting Times in NHSScotland

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About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides an update on how long people waited to start treatment with psychological therapies provided by NHS Scotland, for the quarter ending March 2020.

NHS Boards, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic made changes to their service delivery in March 2020. More information can be found in the Data Quality document.

Main Points

For the quarter ending March 2020:

- 18,268 people started treatment with psychological therapies in 14 NHS Territorial Boards, and NHS 24. This is a 6.5% increase from 17,160 for the previous quarter and a 1.8% increase from 17,951 for the quarter ending March 2019. Half of the people started their treatment within 5 weeks.

- Nearly eight out of ten (77.6%) people started their treatment within 18 weeks, compared to 79.0% for the previous quarter, and 77.4% for the quarter ending March 2019. The Scottish Government standard states that 90% of people should start their treatment within 18 weeks of referral to psychological therapies.

- 1,121 people aged 65+ started treatment with psychological therapies in this quarter. 87.2% started their treatment within 18 weeks, which is a decrease from 89.9% in the previous quarter.
As expected, there has been a drop in referrals during March 2020. In this quarter, 39,034 people were referred to psychological therapies in Scotland which is a 0.8% increase from the previous quarter (38,706) and a 10.1% decrease from the same quarter ending March 2019 (43,443).

Background

Waiting times information with psychological therapies is still being developed. NHS Boards are working with PHS and the Scottish Government to improve the consistency and completeness of the information. From December 2014, the Scottish Government set a standard for the NHS in Scotland to deliver a maximum wait of 18 weeks from a patient’s referral to treatment with psychological therapies. The standard should be delivered for at least 90% of patients.

Psychological therapies refer to a range of interventions, based on psychological concepts and theory, which are designed to help people understand and make changes to their thinking, behaviour and relationships in order to relieve distress and to improve functioning. The standard applies specifically to psychological therapies for treatment of a mental illness or disorder.

Please see News and Updates section of our website for more details.

Please see the Psychological Therapies Report for more information on the data quality.

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Further Information

The latest report and data tables are available on the publication web page. Background and further information is available from our web page.

MHAIST information can be found on the MHAIST webpage on the PHS website.

The Psychology Workforce Planning Project was initiated in 2001 and is a collaboration between NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and ISD.

For related topics, please see either the Waiting Times or MHAIST pages.

The next release of this publication will be September 2020.

PHS and 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.