National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Waiting Times
1 January – 31 March 2020
Publication Date 30 June 2020
This is a National Statistics publication

National Statistics status means that the official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. They are identified by the quality mark shown above.

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

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Introduction

This publication presents data from the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Waiting Times database (DATWT). It includes details on the number of people waiting, the time waited to start drug or alcohol treatment, and information on specific interventions being accessed.

Waiting times are important to patients and are a high profile measure of how Scotland is responding to demands for services. Statistics on waiting times make it possible for a wide range of users to have a clear picture of this aspect of the performance of the NHS across Scotland.

The Scottish Government set a target that by June 2013, 90% of people referred with their drug or alcohol problem will wait no longer than three weeks for treatment that supports their recovery. This was one of the national HEAT (Health improvement, Efficiency, Access, Treatment) targets, number A11. This target was achieved in June 2013 and has now become a Local Delivery Plan (LDP) standard.

This publication presents waiting times data for clients in prison. This is published separately from ADP data but is expected to be the same level of performance in line with the delivery of the LDP standard for drug and alcohol treatment waiting times.

Information about waiting times for drug and alcohol treatment is provided by the treatment services and collected in the DATWT database which went live across Scotland on 1st January 2011. The DATWT database collates information about the length of time people wait for specialist drug and/or alcohol treatment after they have been referred to treatment services in Scotland.

Prior to the introduction of the database, information was only collected on drug treatment waiting times that were measured in two stages: the wait from receiving a referral to the date of assessment offered, and the wait from a care plan being agreed to the date that a treatment is offered. Because of the differences in the current and old data collection, it is not possible to directly compare drug waiting times from the DATWT database with those recorded under the former National Drug Waiting Times Information Framework.

ISD publish other information on drugs services which can be found here.
Main Points

Drug and Alcohol Waiting Times - January to March 2020

- During the quarter, 94.7% of the 9,267 people who started their first drug or alcohol treatment waited 3 weeks or less, an increase from the same quarter in the previous year (93.2%).
  - 94.0% of the 5,113 people seeking alcohol treatment waited 3 weeks or less, an increase from 93.0% in the same quarter a year ago.
  - 95.5% of the 4,154 people seeking drug treatment waited 3 weeks or less, an increase from 93.5% in the same quarter a year ago.

- At the end of the quarter, 1,974 people were waiting to start their first drug or alcohol treatment. Of those waiting 9.1% (180) had waited more than 6 weeks, an increase from 6.5% (193) waiting at the end of the same quarter a year ago.

- Quarterly trends reveal consistent performance over time with little change.

- 12 NHS Boards met the standard during the quarter; NHS Highland and NHS Lothian did not.

- 94.4% of the 39,889 people who started a first drug or alcohol treatment between April 2019 and March 2020 waited 3 weeks or less.

Prisons Drug and Alcohol Waiting Times - January to March 2020

- In prisons, 93.7% of the 811 people who started their first drug or alcohol treatment during the quarter waited 3 weeks or less, a decrease from the same quarter in the previous year (96.9%).

- 7 NHS Boards met the LDP standard during the quarter for people in prison; NHS Forth Valley, NHS Lothian, and NHS Tayside did not.
Results and Commentary

Interpreting the Data

While the data are considered to be of good quality, caution is still recommended when interpreting trends in these statistics for a few reasons:

There is a wide range of demand for substance misuse services across Scotland, and to meet this demand appropriately, services are tailored to local needs. In some Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) areas, the impact of a single specialised service – for example, a crisis management centre – may dramatically alter the distribution of waiting times in that ADP.

Some of the ADPs and NHS Boards, particularly Island Boards, are treating a small number of people; caution is therefore recommended when interpreting differences in percentages in these organisations over time, as a small change in numbers of individuals can result in a large but potentially meaningless change in percentages.

Services are required to submit accurate and up-to-date information to the DATWT. It is the responsibility of the ADPs to ensure the compliance of the services, including prisons, in their area and to help them assure the quality of the data they submit. ISD continue to monitor the number of services submitting data, levels of submission and provide additional training where necessary. The DATWT web system also has inbuilt validation to ensure high quality data. More information can be found on the Data Quality pages.

Although the number of services included in each quarter of data varies, the percentage of services submitting data (compliance) across Scotland is consistently greater than 95% therefore this has little effect on the comparability and reliability of data published. See Table 9 for information on compliance across Scotland.

This publication includes waiting times data for drug and alcohol treatment in prisons. ISD are working with NHS boards and ADPs to ensure that compliance is high and that the data collected and submitted to the DATWT database is accurate and reliable. Currently 14 ADPs submit data for all 15 prisons in Scotland.

When DATWT data are extracted for reporting it is a snapshot of what is on the system at that time. The DATWT is a dynamic database, which means that data for previous quarters are updated and so may not be the same as found in previous publications for the same time period.

Data for the most recent quarter is provisional and as such is subject to revisions in future publications. The revisions generally have a greater impact on the number and distribution of ongoing waits with the percentage waiting less than three/five weeks’ statistics likely to be revised upwards in future publications. Significant revisions are noted in the Publication Metadata section of this report.
Drug and Alcohol Treatment Waiting Times

This section includes information on people who began their first treatment, or who were waiting to begin their first treatment for alcohol or drug use between January and March 2020.

All tables referred to are available here.

Performance against the Standard

Data from the latest quarter presented in Figure 1 shows that NHS Boards in Scotland, with the exception of NHS Highland and NHS Lothian, met the LDP standard that at least 90% of people who started drug or alcohol treatment waited 3 weeks or less.

During the quarter, 94.7% of the 9,267 people who started their first drug or alcohol treatment waited 3 weeks or less and 56.1% waited 1 week or less (Table 3).

For the 1,974 people who were still waiting to start drug or alcohol treatment at the end of the quarter, 9.1% had been waiting for more than 6 weeks (Table 6).
Figure 2 shows the performance against the standard by type of service.

- **94.0%** of the 5,113 people, who began alcohol treatment during the quarter, waited 3 weeks or less. All NHS Boards in Scotland met the LDP standard during the latest quarter, with the exception of NHS Fife, NHS Highland, and NHS Lothian.

- **95.5%** of the 4,154 people, who began drug treatment during the quarter, waited 3 weeks or less. 10 of the NHS Boards in Scotland met the LDP standard during the quarter, NHS Dumfries and Galloway, NHS Highland, NHS Lothian, and NHS Western Isles did not (Table 3).
Figure 3 shows trend data for the proportion of people referred for drug or alcohol treatment in Scotland who waited 3 weeks or less. Quarterly trends over the last 3 years show that performance has remained consistent.

Between January and March 2020, 94.0% of people who started a first alcohol treatment and 95.5% of people who started a first drug treatment waited 3 weeks or less, compared with 93.0% for alcohol treatment and 93.5% for drug treatment between January and March 2019.

Figure 3: People Starting Drug and Alcohol treatment in Scotland: Percentage seen within 3 weeks, by quarter

Please note that the vertical axis on this chart does not originate at zero.
Drug and Alcohol Treatment Waiting Times for clients in prison

Performance against the Standard

93.7% of the 811 people in prison who started their first drug or alcohol treatment between January and March 2020 waited 3 weeks or less; with 71.0% having been seen within 1 week (Table 1).

29.8% of the 104 people still waiting to start drug or alcohol treatment at the end of the quarter had been waiting for more than 6 weeks (Table 2).

Figure 4 shows that in the latest quarter all NHS Boards, except NHS Forth Valley, NHS Lothian, and NHS Tayside, met the LDP standard for people in prison.

Figure 4: People Starting Drug and Alcohol treatment in Prisons in Scotland during January – March 2020: Percentage waited 3 weeks or less, by NHS Board
Figure 5 shows the performance against the standard in prisons by service type.

- 97.8% of the 90 people who started alcohol treatment in prison during the quarter, waited 3 weeks or less. In Scotland, all NHS Boards met the LDP standard except NHS Forth Valley. NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Tayside had no completed alcohol waiting times for the quarter.

- 93.2% of the 721 people who started drug treatment in prison during the quarter waited 3 weeks or less. In Scotland, all NHS Boards met the LDP standard except NHS Forth Valley, NHS Lothian, and NHS Tayside.

Figure 5: People Starting Drug and Alcohol treatment in Prisons in Scotland during January – March 2020: Percentage waited 3 weeks or less, by service type and NHS Board
All Treatments

The DATWT Web system collects data on nine separate treatment types. These have been aggregated into five groups:

- Structured preparatory and motivational intervention
- Prescribed drug treatment (includes prescribing by GP or specialist)
- Community based detoxification
- Community based support and/or rehabilitation (includes structured psychosocial interventions, structured day programmes and other structured)
- Residential Detoxification and Rehabilitation (includes residential rehabilitation and residential detoxification/ inpatient treatment)

All Treatments includes any treatments for alcohol or drug use started between January and March 2020, which may be first or subsequent treatments.

- 5,909 alcohol treatments commenced in Scotland during the quarter (Table 7). Frequently accessed treatments during the quarter included 3,024 structured preparatory and motivational interventions and 2,204 community based support and/or rehabilitation treatments.

- 4,835 drug treatments commenced in Scotland during the quarter (Table 7). Frequently accessed treatments during the latest quarter included 2,326 structured preparatory and motivational interventions and 1,864 community based support and/or rehabilitation treatments.

Full Year of Data (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020)

This publication includes a report on completed waits for drug and alcohol treatment from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

- Of the 39,889 people who started their first drug or alcohol treatment between 1st April 2019 and 31 March 2020, 94.4% had waited three weeks or less and 55.6% had waited one week or less (Table 1).
- 94.1% of the 22,046 people who started their first treatment for alcohol use waited three weeks or less.
- 94.7% of the 17,843 people who started their first treatment for drug use waited three weeks or less.
Service compliance

Information on compliance can be found here: spreadsheet at this link.

Between January and March 2020, 200 out of 205 (97.6%) services submitted complete data. All 15 prisons submitted complete data.

ADPs are asked to encourage services under their respective remits to submit data. Table 9 in the DATWT Tables shows the number of ADPs returning data within each Health Board. Table 3 in the DATWT Prison Tables shows the number of ADPs returning data for prisons.
Glossary

ADAT  Alcohol and Drug Action Team
ADP   Alcohol and Drug Partnership
DATWT Drug and Alcohol Treatment Waiting Times
HEAT  Health improvement, Efficiency, Access, Treatment
PHS   Public Health Scotland
LDP   Local Delivery Plan

For more information on treatment types see the document at HEAT A11: Updated Drug and Alcohol Treatment Types
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Further Information

Further information and data for this publication are available from the PHS website.

For more information on Drug and Alcohol Waiting Times see our website. For related topics, please see the substance use pages.

The next release of this publication will be 29 September 2020.

Open data

Data from this publication is available to download from the NHSScotland Open Data platform.

Rate this publication

Let us know what you think about this publication via. the link at the bottom of this publication page on the PHS website.
Appendices

Appendix 1 – Background information

The National Drug Waiting Times Information Framework was introduced in January 2004. This included guidance and definitions on data items to be collected for drug waiting times. The aim of the framework was to give Alcohol and Drug Action Teams (ADATs) a consistent structure for local monitoring of treatment services.

In February 2007, ISD provided ADATs with a revised data collection system that enabled ADATs to produce a wider range of reports and also provided the facility for ADATs to monitor data quality more easily.

Operational structures changed in January 2009, when the 22 ADATs were dissolved and replaced by 30 Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs). The Waiting Times Framework was designed to function at ADAT level.

In January 2011 an improved Drug and Alcohol Treatment Waiting Times Database went live across Scotland. This was the first time that data on alcohol as well as drug treatments was recorded nationally, and the first time information was available on the full client journey from assessment to treatment. This database also facilitates reporting at ADP level.

The benefits of the database are:

- ADPs have more accurate waiting times information to monitor equity of access for drug and alcohol clients across their local area.
- ADPs can use this information to hold meaningful, informed discussions with agencies about blockages in the system.
- ADPs will be able to monitor levels of non-attendance and long waits and use this information for service redesign.
- ADPs can monitor their performance against the LDP standard, services with long waits, and records which have not been updated.
- ADPs can measure the full wait from Referral to Treatment in one stage.
- The database records periods of unavailability so a service is not penalised if, for example, a client is on holiday or in prison.
- Nine different treatment ‘types’ are recorded giving a more specific detailed breakdown of the kind of treatments being accessed by clients. The responsibility for provision of healthcare to prisoners in Scotland was transferred from the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) to the NHS on 1st November 2011. ADPs are now responsible for the collection and submission of Drug and Alcohol Treatment waiting times in prisons.
Appendix 2 – Publication Metadata

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Data are presented on the number of clients seen and the length of time they are waited to be seen for drug or alcohol treatment interventions. Data are shown by Health Board, Alcohol and Drug Partnership area and prison.</td>
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<td>Access and Waiting Times</td>
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<td>Format</td>
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<td>Data source(s)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release date</td>
<td>30 June 2020</td>
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<td>Frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timeframe of data and timeliness</td>
<td>The timeframe for this publication is January – March 2020. The publication is considered timely as there have been no delays.</td>
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<td>Continuity of data</td>
<td>These data are not comparable with data previously published from the old Drug Waiting Times Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revisions statement</td>
<td>Planned Revisions are a feature of this publications release: historic data will be revised.</td>
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<td>Historic data has been revised to account for waiting times records which are belatedly updated on the web system and/or services which were previously not included for data quality reasons. The impact of these revisions are: Quarterly trend (January – March 2020) Individual mainland Board and ADP figures do not vary by more than five percentage points unless specified.</td>
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<td>Concepts and definitions</td>
<td>More information about the methods used to produce the drugs and alcohol waiting times statistics and guidance documents can be found on the PHS website.</td>
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<td>Relevance and key uses of the statistics</td>
<td>Key uses of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Waiting Times Information include: performance management, monitoring against the LDP standard and service planning.</td>
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<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>The current Alcohol and Drug Treatment Waiting Times Database has strong inbuilt validation. It also allows PHS to monitor data quality throughout the</td>
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<td>It is the policy of PHS to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines.</td>
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Appendix 3 – Early access details

Pre-Release Access

Under terms of the "Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008", PHS is obliged to publish information on those receiving Pre-Release Access ("Pre-Release Access" refers to statistics in their final form prior to publication). The standard maximum Pre-Release Access is five working days. Shown below are details of those receiving standard Pre-Release Access.

Standard Pre-Release Access:

Scottish Government Health Department

NHS Board Chief Executives

NHS Board Communication leads

Scottish Prison Service

Early Access for Management Information

These statistics will also have been made available to those who needed access to ‘management information’, ie as part of the delivery of health and care:

Scottish Government Drug Policy Unit

Scottish Government Alcohol Policy Unit

Early Access for Quality Assurance

These statistics will also have been made available to those who needed access to help quality assure the publication:

Alcohol and Drug Partnership Coordinators
Appendix 4 – PHS and Official Statistics

About Public Health Scotland (PHS)

PHS is a knowledge-based and intelligence driven organisation with a critical reliance on data and information to enable it to be an independent voice for the public’s health, leading collaboratively and effectively across the Scottish public health system, accountable at local and national levels, and providing leadership and focus for achieving better health and wellbeing outcomes for the population. Our statistics comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics in terms of trustworthiness, high quality and public value. This also means that we keep data secure at all stages, through collection, processing, analysis and output production, and adhere to the ‘five safes’.