IVF Waiting Times in NHSScotland

Quarters ending 31 March and 30 June 2020

An Official Statistics release for Scotland

Publication date: 25 August 2020

About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland contains an update on how long eligible patients waited from referral to screening appointment for in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment by the NHS in Scotland. The standard is for 90% of eligible patients to be screened at an IVF Centre within 365 days of receipt of referral from a secondary care/acute consultant.

Main Points

As a result of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, IVF treatment was paused across Scotland during March with all existing treatment completed by 15 April 2020, impacting on data for both quarters.

- During the quarter ending 31 March 2020, 276 referrals were received by the IVF Centres. This compares to 354 referrals for the same quarter in 2019, a decrease of 22%. During the quarter ending 30 June 2020, 105 referrals were received by the IVF Centres, compared to 288 referrals for the same quarter in 2019, a decrease of 64%. Most of these referrals were received in June 2020.

- During the quarter ending 31 March 2020, 396 eligible patients were screened at an IVF Centre in Scotland, with 100% screened within 365 days. This compares to 366 eligible patients screened during quarter ending 31 March 2019. As IVF services were paused in March 2020, only 7 patients were screened at an IVF Centre during quarter end 30 June 2020, compared to 290 patients during quarter ending 30 June 2019.

- At 31 March 2020, 690 eligible patients were waiting to be screened compared to 581 patients at 31 March 2019. At 30 June 2020, 817 eligible patients were waiting compared to 620 at 30 June 2019.

Distribution of patients waiting for IVF screening appointments, January 2020 – June 2020
At 30 June 2020, the percentage of patients who had been waiting 91 days or less (16.2%) was much lower than the 44.2% at 30 June 2019 and 49.6% at 31 March 2020, while the percentage of patients who had been waiting 274-365 days (10.0%) was higher than the 4.2% at 30 June 2019 and 1.4% at 31 March 2020.

The increased number of patients waiting (127, 18.4%) between March and June 2020 is a result of both very few patients having screening appointments during the quarter April – June 2020 and referrals to the IVF Centres beginning to increase again in June 2020.

The 90% standard continues to be met since it was first measured in March 2015.

**Background**

IVF is an effective method of assisted reproductive technology used to treat infertility. This includes intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) for male infertility.

Where this publication refers to IVF, it includes IVF and ICSI. One full cycle of IVF includes ovulation induction, egg retrieval, fertilisation, transfer of fresh embryos, followed by freezing of suitable embryos and subsequent replacement of these provided the couple still fulfil the access criteria.

Each of the 14 territorial NHS Boards in Scotland commissions cycles of IVF from one of the four specialist tertiary Centres providing NHS treatment (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow).

The Scottish Government requires NHSScotland to measure the length of time people wait for treatment. The target is that 90% of eligible patients will begin IVF treatment within 12 months. This is measured by the percentage of patients who were screened at an IVF Centre within 12 months of referral from a secondary care/acute consultant. The Scottish Government set this target from 31 March 2015 and it is now a Local Delivery Plan (LDP) standard.

**Contact**

IVF Mailbox – phs.IVF@nhs.net

Diane Barrie  
Senior Information Analyst  
0131 314 1203  
diane.barrrie@nhs.net

Tracey Steedman  
Principal Information Analyst  
0131 275 6179  
tracey.steedman@nhs.net

For all media enquiries please email phs.comms@nhs.net or call 07500 854 574.

**Further Information**

Data from this publication are available from the publication page on our website.

The next release of this publication will be 24 November 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.](#)