Hospital Waiting Times

New Outpatients, Inpatients & Day Cases

A National Statistics release for Scotland
Publication date: 25 August 2020

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

The statistics presented for this period are affected in part by the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak and this is highlighted where possible, as this has affected referral and treatment patterns. More specifically, on the 17 March, NHSScotland was placed on emergency footing and Boards were asked to suspend all non-urgent elective treatment and on the 23 March the nation entered a period of ‘lockdown’. As Scotland moved into Phase 2 of the ‘lockdown’, from the 19 June, some services started to resume as part of the planned remobilisation of services.

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

- In the quarter ending 30 June 2020 there were only 122,221 patients seen under this standard. This is 61.7% less that seen in the previous quarter and 65.9% less than the same quarter in 2019. This reduction is due to many outpatient services being paused at some stage during the quarter with some seeing fewer patients when resuming due to the requirement for additional infection control measures.

- Of those patients seen, 75.8% were seen within 12 weeks of referral, a slight decrease compared to the previous quarter (77.1%). However, there were only 29,628 such patients - 59.5% less than the previous quarter. Half of patients seen had waited 18 days or less, perhaps an indication of the prioritisation of those with more urgent care needs.

- At the end of the quarter there were 265,301 patients waiting to be seen - 4.8% higher than at the end of March but slightly lower (-0.2%) than at the end of February, just prior to NHSScotland being placed under emergency measures. The number of patients waiting reduced significantly (-4.4%) between the end of February and the end of March as services took additional steps to prioritise, manage and administer patients who were already waiting or scheduled to be seen. However, the number waiting at the end of each month has grown since the end of March with additions to waiting lists exceeding the number removed from lists, whether removed because patients were seen or otherwise.

- The distribution of the waits experienced so far by those waiting to be seen had also changed substantially by the end of the quarter - 28.5% (75,579) of patients had been waiting 12 weeks or less, 49.9% (132,440) had waited more than 12 weeks but no more than 24 weeks, 19.7% (52,320) had waited more than 24 weeks but no more than 51 weeks and 1.8% (4,963) had waited 52 weeks or more.

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 30 June 2020 there were only 15,239 patients admitted under this standard. This is 76.7% less that seen in the previous quarter and 78.7% less than the same quarter in 2019. The number patients admitted increased over the quarter as services began to resume – there were 7,147 patients in June compared to 3,665 in April.

Of those patients seen, 82.0% were seen within 12 weeks of referral. Half of patients seen had waited 15 days or less, and almost 60% of patients had waited 3 weeks or less, perhaps an indication that those with more urgent care needs being prioritised.

At the end of the quarter there were 86,031 patients waiting to be seen – 7.6% higher than at the end of at the end of February, which was just prior to NHSScotland being placed under emergency measures. Throughout the quarter the number of patients being admitted began to increase week by week, although the number admitted in the last week of June was still 70% less than that in the last week of February. The number of additions to waiting lists also began to grow steadily as the referrals began to increase again. As a consequence, the number waiting grew because throughout the quarter the number of additions exceeded the number removed from lists, whether due to patients being admitted or otherwise.

The distribution of the waits experienced so far by those waiting for treatment had also changed substantially by the end of the quarter - 17.3% (14,897) patients had been waiting 12 weeks or less, 48.2% (41,463) had waited more than 12 weeks but no more than 24 weeks, 29.9% (25,721) had waited more than 24 weeks but no more than 51 weeks and 4.6% (3,950) had waited 52 weeks or more.

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)

Contact

Stuart Kerr
Principal Information Analyst
0131 275 6363
Email : phs.isdwaitingtimes@nhs.net

Amye Thomson
Senior Information Analyst
0141 207 1894

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 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.