Psychological Therapies Waiting Times in NHSScotland

An Official Statistics release for Scotland
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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 June 2020.

NHS Boards, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic made changes to their service delivery in March 2020. All NHS Boards have advised that the measures put in place have had an impact on their figures for this quarter. More information can be found in the Data Quality document.

Main Points

For the quarter ending June 2020:

- 11,042 people started psychological therapies treatment in NHS Boards and NHS 24. This is a 39.6% decrease from 18,268 for the previous quarter and a 37.6% decrease from 17,695 for the quarter ending June 2019. Half of the people started their treatment within 3 weeks.

- Nearly three quarters (74.3%) of people started their treatment within 18 weeks, compared to 77.6% for the previous quarter, and 78.7% for the quarter ending June 2019. The Scottish Government standard states that 90% of people should start their treatment within 18 weeks of referral to psychological therapies.

- 537 people aged 65+ years started treatment with psychological therapies in this quarter. 84.4% started their treatment within 18 weeks, a decrease from 87.2% in the previous quarter and a decrease from 87.3% for the quarter ending June 2019.
• Changes in working practices, including staff being re-deployed and the provision of on-line appointments (which not all patients wished to take up) during the pandemic have led to fewer people starting treatment during this time.
• As expected, there has been a drop in referrals during this quarter, with 21,827 people being referred for psychological therapies in Scotland. This is a 44.1% decrease from the 39,034 people referred in the previous quarter, and a 43.0% decrease from the same quarter ending June 2019 (38,314 referrals).

**Background**

Waiting times information for 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.

The reduction in referrals during this quarter is reflective of decreases in referrals and access to other healthcare services, for example people not wanting to place additional pressure on the NHS, worried about contracting COVID-19 if they attended, changes to working practices, including the services that Psychological Therapies could deliver during this time.

Please see [News and Updates section](#) of our website for more details.

Please see the full [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 online, [on former ISD webpages](#) which remain accessible. 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 December 2020.

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**PHS and Official Statistics**

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