

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

September 2014

## Introduction

This briefing provides information on the performance of Local Health Boards (LHBs) against the Welsh Government targets for NHS treatment waiting times. Most NHS waiting times in Wales are measured against the time from referral to treatment (RTT), although there are a number of exceptions.<sup>1</sup> The RTT is the period of time from referral, by a GP or other medical practitioner, to hospital for treatment.<sup>2</sup>

The current Welsh Government targets for NHS RTT waiting times are to ensure that:

- **At least 95 per cent of patients waiting to start treatment must have waited less than 26 weeks from referral to treatment**
- **100 per cent of patients not treated within 26 weeks must be treated in 36 weeks.**

The Welsh Government measures progress against these targets each month, and the figures used are those for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of the month. Separate figures for patients treated during each month are published,<sup>3</sup> but as these are not covered by the targets they have not been included in this release.

<sup>1</sup> The targets apply to the majority of referrals to NHS hospitals for treatment; however there are a number of exceptions. In addition, some conditions such as cancer have their own specific target, and are therefore not included in the general targets. Further information on referral to treatment targets is available at: Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times – April 2012](#), page 4, 14 June 2012 [accessed 12 September 2014]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, July 2014](#), 11 September 2014 [accessed 12 September 2014]

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

The LHB figures included in this release are for patients treated by each LHB rather than the LHB they live in.

On 13 March 2014 the Minister for Health and Social Services, Mark Drakeford, announced new funding of £5 million to go towards cutting waits for diagnostic tests.<sup>4</sup> The Minister stated that improving speed of access to these tests will mean that patients can start their full treatment more quickly, meaning that overall waiting times should reduce.

## NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times in July 2014

Table 1 and figures 1 and 2 show performance against the 26 and 36 week referral to treatment waiting time targets for each LHB, and for the whole of Wales, using the latest figures from July 2014.<sup>5</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- In **July 2014**, neither the 26 week nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.
- **Powys Teaching Health Board** achieved both the 26 week and the 36 week referral to treatment waiting time target in July 2014.
- **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for the 26 week target. **Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board** was the worst performing LHB for the 36 week target.

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government, [New funding to speed up access to treatment](#), 13 March 2014 [accessed 12 September 2014]

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, July 2014](#), 11 September 2014 [accessed 12 September 2014]



**Table 1: Performance against waiting time targets at end of July 2014 (a), (c),**

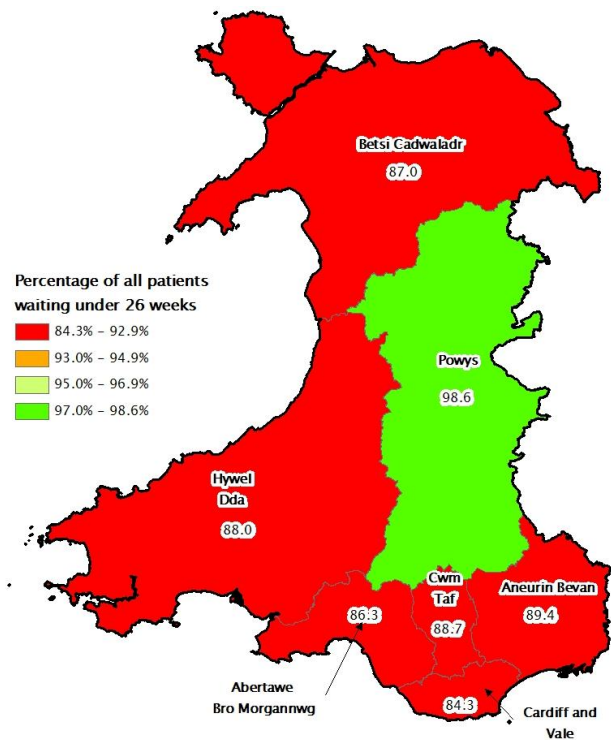
Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	70,283	86.3	77,706	95.5	3,693	81,399
Aneurin Bevan	71,439	89.4	77,544	97.0	2,397	79,941
Betsi Cadwaladr	75,312	87.0	82,209	94.9	4,387	86,596
Cardiff and Vale	70,253	84.3	79,320	95.1	4,044	83,364
Cwm Taf	36,321	88.7	39,783	97.1	1,179	40,962
Hywel Dda	49,140	88.0	53,894	96.5	1,949	55,843
Powys	5,553	98.6	5,634	100.0	.	5,634
<b>Wales</b>	<b>378,301</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>416,090</b>	<b>95.9</b>	<b>17,649</b>	<b>433,739</b>

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting**,

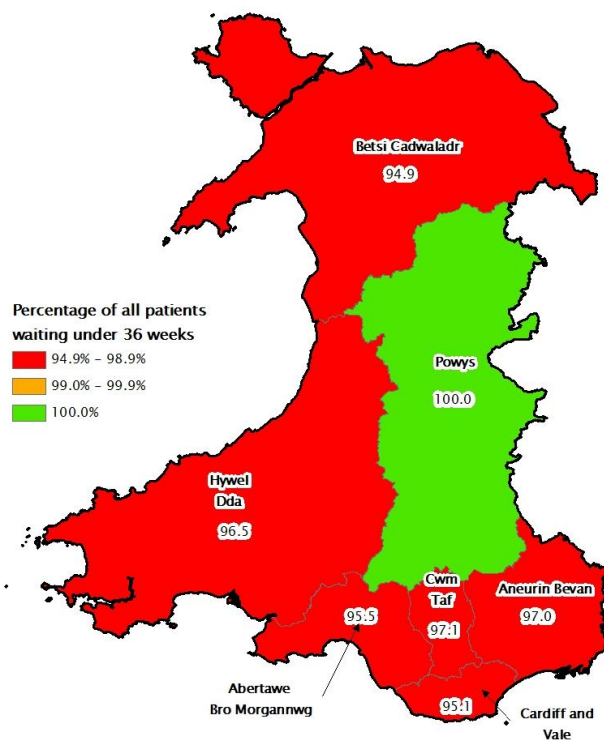
Notes:

- (a) This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the **Referral to Treatment Time quality report** for further details.
- (b) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (c) The values in the purple shaded boxes met the referral to treatment waiting time target in July 2014.

**Figure 1: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment at end of July 2014**



**Figure 2: Percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment at end of July 2014**



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Source: Statswales

Contains Ordnance Survey data.

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## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since July 2013

**Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since July 2013.6**

It can be seen from table 2 and figure 3 that:

- **Neither target has been met in any month** at an All Wales level between July 2013 and July 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in July 2014 was 0.1 percentage points lower than in June 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in July 2014 was 0.3 percentage points lower than in June 2014, and the lowest of any point over the past year.
- The number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was over 6,500 more than in July 2013.
- Over 17,000 more people were waiting for treatment at the end of July 2014 compared to July 2013. The number of patients waiting for treatment at the end of July 2014 is the second highest at any point over the past year, and also since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2: Performance against waiting time targets, on All Wales basis, July 2013 to July 2014 (a), (b)**

Date	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
July 2013	375,192	90.1	405,389	97.3	11,109	416,498
August 2013	370,964	88.6	405,375	96.9	13,147	418,522
September 2013	368,569	88.4	405,265	97.2	11,672	416,937
October 2013	366,875	88.2	403,742	97.0	12,281	416,023
November 2013	364,999	88.0	401,502	96.8	13,269	414,771
December 2013	360,170	86.6	401,045	96.5	14,745	415,790
January 2014	357,719	86.8	396,043	96.1	16,109	412,152
February 2014	364,004	87.9	398,675	96.3	15,388	414,063
March 2014	371,877	88.9	407,856	97.5	10,586	418,442
April 2014	371,744	87.7	411,214	97.0	12,795	424,009
May 2014	371,205	86.3	414,864	96.4	15,498	430,362
June 2014	379,870	87.3	418,716	96.2	16,400	435,116
July 2014	378,301	87.2	416,090	95.9	17,649	433,739

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#)

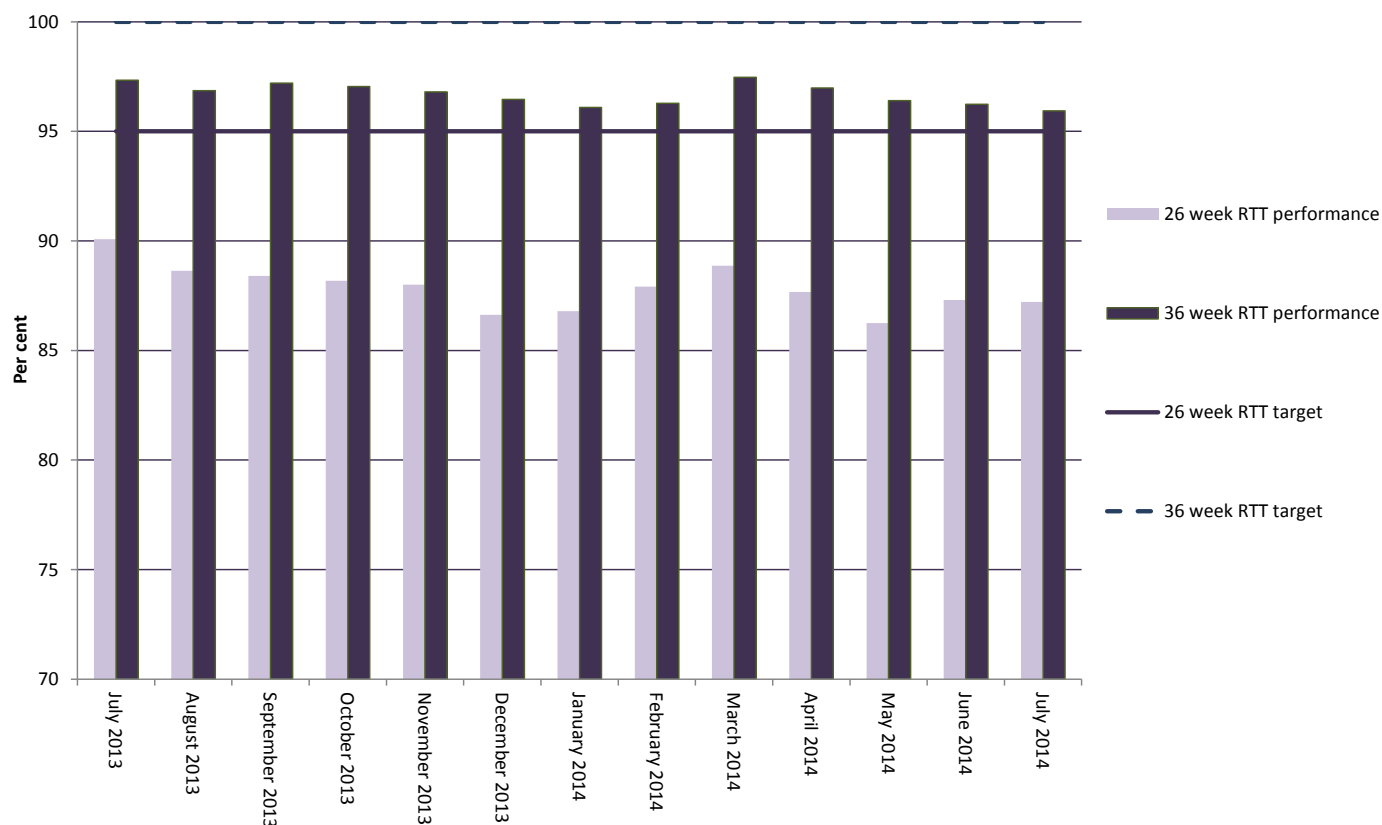
Notes:

- (a) This includes patients who are waiting for cardiac treatment. Cardiac RTT is defined differently from the rest of RTT; please refer to the [Referral to treatment time quality report](#) for further details.
- (b) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 12 September 2014]

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 12 September 2014]

**Figure 3: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks at end of month from July 2013 to July 2014**



Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, **Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks**

Notes – See notes from Table 2

## Trauma and orthopaedic speciality

While waiting time targets are allied to performance across all specialties, it is useful to see the contribution of individual specialties towards performance.

In a written statement in March 2011, the then Minister for Health and Social Services highlighted the difficulty in achieving waiting time targets due to pressures within orthopaedic services resulting from increased GP referrals. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government, Edwina Hart (Minister for Health and Social Services), **Waiting Times and Orthopaedic Services update**, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [accessed 12 September 2014]

Following additional funding allocations for orthopaedic treatment in 2011-12 and 2012-13, the Welsh Government stated that £16.6 million will be allocated in recurrent annual funding from 2013-14 with the purpose of sustaining improvements in orthopaedic waiting times.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government, **Draft Budget 2013-14: A Budget for Growth and Jobs**, page 38, October 2012 [accessed 12 September 2014]



Table 3 shows the latest figures for the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, at the end of July 2014.

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of July 2014, (a), (b)**

Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (a)		Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	7,807	73.3	9,307	87.4	10,650
Aneurin Bevan	11,145	78.4	12,906	90.8	14,209
Betsi Cadwaladr	8,553	71.2	10,367	86.3	12,011
Cardiff and Vale	8,037	86.9	8,980	97.1	9,249
Cwm Taf	4,005	85.4	4,521	96.4	4,691
Hywel Dda	6,048	75.4	7,019	87.6	8,017
Powys	483	98.6	490	100.0	490
<b>Wales</b>	<b>46,078</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>53,590</b>	<b>90.3</b>	<b>59,317</b>

Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales **Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting**

Notes:

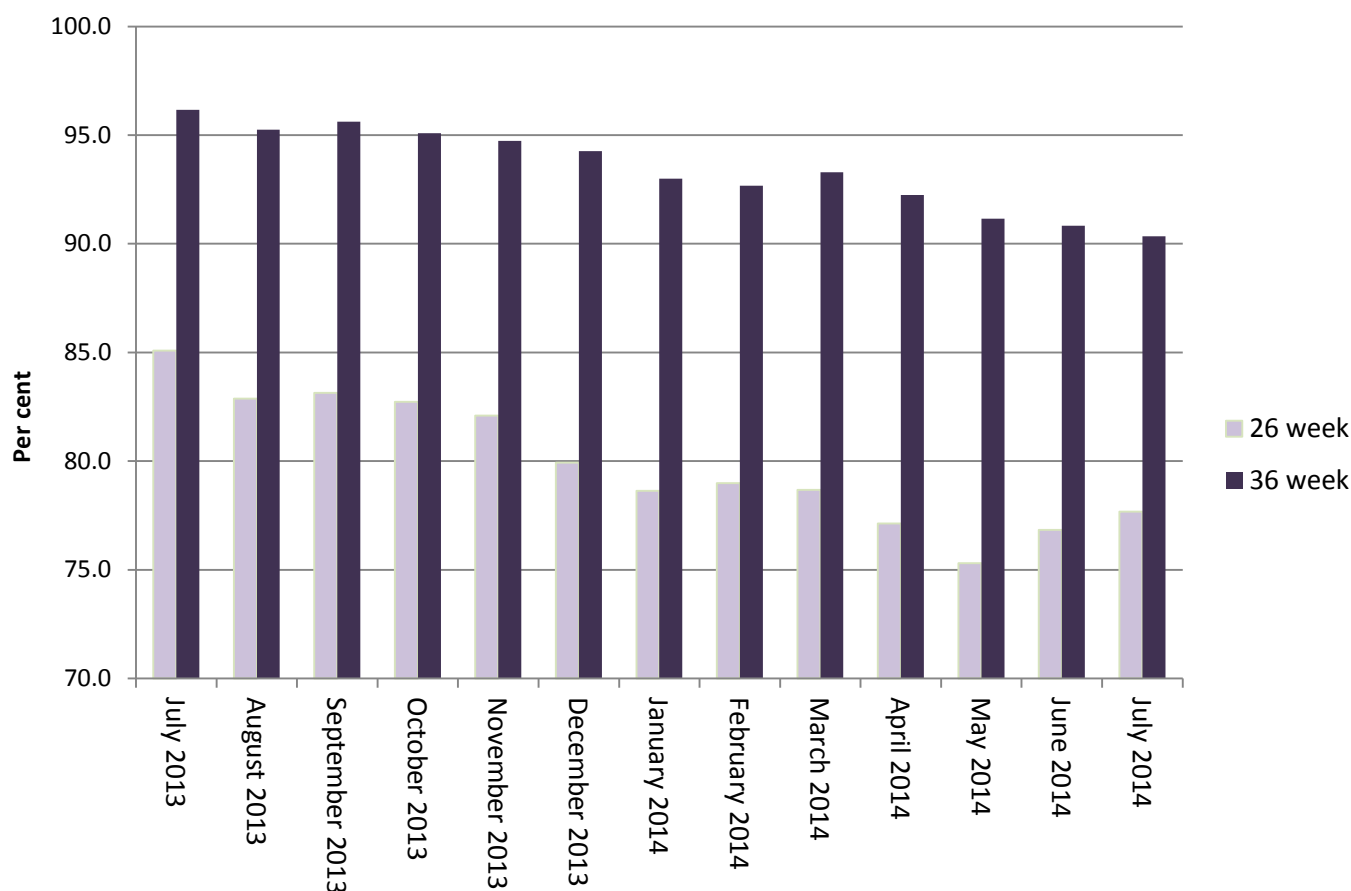
- (a) The figures for patients waiting under 36 weeks for treatment include those waiting under 26 weeks and between 26 and 36 weeks for treatment.
- (b) Values in the purple shaded boxes indicate a level of performance in July 2014 equal to or above that needed to achieve the waiting time targets.

In July 2014, it can be seen that:

- **In Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks. In all other LHBs, less than 87 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment.
- **In Powys Teaching Health Board**, all patients had been waiting under 36 weeks for treatment. In all other LHBs, less than 98 per cent of patients had been waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under 26 and 36 weeks was **Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board**.

Figure 4 compares the percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in the months from July 2013 to July 2014.

**Figure 4: Percentage of patients waiting less than 26 and 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty, from July 2013 to July 2014**



Source: Research Service calculations from Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#)

- For each month since July 2013, the percentage of patients waiting under 26 weeks has been **well below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties**. The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in July 2014 was 0.9 percentage points higher than June 2014. This was the fourth lowest of any month over the past year and also since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011.<sup>10</sup>
- For each month since July 2013, the percentage of patients waiting under 36 weeks has also been **below the level needed to achieve the waiting time target across all specialties**. The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in July 2014 was the lowest of any point over the past year, and since figures started to be produced in the current format in September 2011. It decreased by 0.5 percentage points compared to June 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 12 September 2014]



## Further information

The links below provide further information about the data sources used in this briefing, and further information about NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times:

- Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, July 2014](#)
- Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#)
- Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by latest month, local health board and weeks waiting](#)
- Statistics on patients that have been treated during each month are available at:
- Stats Wales, [Treated patients by month and grouped weeks](#)

For further information and statistics on NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times, please contact **Nigel Barwise** ([Nigel.Barwise@wales.gov.uk](mailto:Nigel.Barwise@wales.gov.uk)), **Research Service**.

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**Enquiry no: 14/2338**