

# NHS Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

July 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. The LHB figures

<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 14 July 2014]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, May 2014](#), 10 July 2014 [accessed 14 July 2014]

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

included in this release are for patients treated by each LHB rather

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 May 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 May 2014.<sup>5</sup> It can be seen from table 1 and figure 1 that:

- In **May 2014**, neither the 26 week nor 36 week targets were met on an All Wales basis.
- **Powys Teaching Health Board** achieved the 26 week referral to treatment waiting time target in May 2014. In Powys, one patient was waiting more than 36 weeks for treatment since referral.
- **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 14 July 2014]

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, [Referral to Treatment Times, May 2014](#), 10 July 2014 [accessed 14 July 2014]



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

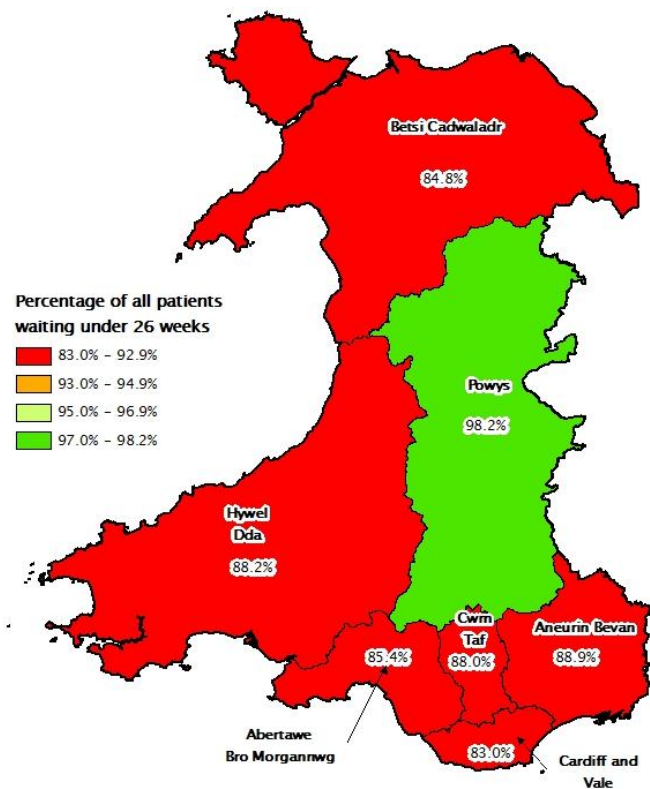
Local Health Board	Under 26 weeks		Under 36 weeks (b)		Over 36 weeks	Total patients waiting for treatment
	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	Percentage of all patients waiting	Number of patients waiting	
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	69,911	85.4	78,898	96.3	2,989	81,887
Aneurin Bevan	70,327	88.9	77,213	97.6	1,866	79,079
Betsi Cadwaladr	75,220	84.8	84,163	94.9	4,561	88,724
Cardiff and Vale	66,236	83.0	76,384	95.8	3,377	79,761
Cwm Taf	34,335	88.0	38,113	97.7	904	39,017
Hywel Dda	49,395	88.2	54,208	96.8	1,800	56,008
Powys (d)	5,781	98.2	5,885	100.0	1	5,886
<b>Wales</b>	<b>371,205</b>	<b>86.3</b>	<b>414,864</b>	<b>96.4</b>	<b>15,498</b>	<b>430,362</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 value in the purple shaded box met the referral to treatment waiting time target in May 2014.
- (d) Powys Health Board's figure showing 100% of patients waiting under 36 weeks is due to rounding, a more precise figure is 99.98%, as shown on the maps below.

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

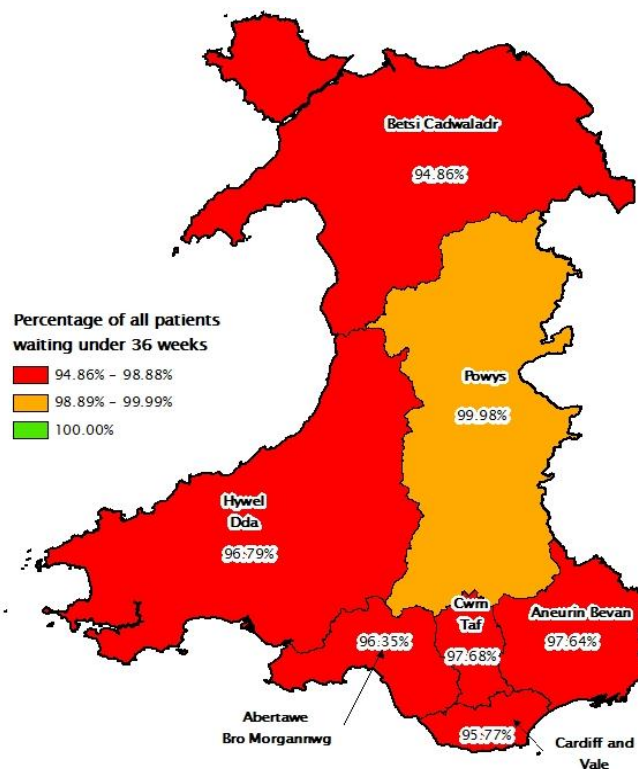


Source: Statswales

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Contains Ordnance Survey data.

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



Source: Statswales

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Contains Ordnance Survey data.



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## Performance against RTT waiting time targets since May 2013

Table 2 and figure 3 focus on the performance against the referral to treatment waiting time targets, on an All Wales basis since May 2013.<sup>6</sup>

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 May 2013 and May 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks for treatment in May 2014 was 1.4 percentage points lower than in April 2014.
- The percentage of patients waiting less than 36 weeks for treatment in May 2014 was 0.6 percentage points lower than in April 2014.
- The number of patients waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was over 2,700 more than April 2014.
- Over 24,000 more people were waiting for treatment at the end of May 2014 compared to May 2013. The number of patients waiting for treatment at the end of May 2014 is the 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, May 2013 to May 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	
May 2013	362,209	89.3	396,802	97.8	8,933	405,735
June 2013	368,365	89.8	399,938	97.5	10,123	410,061
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

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

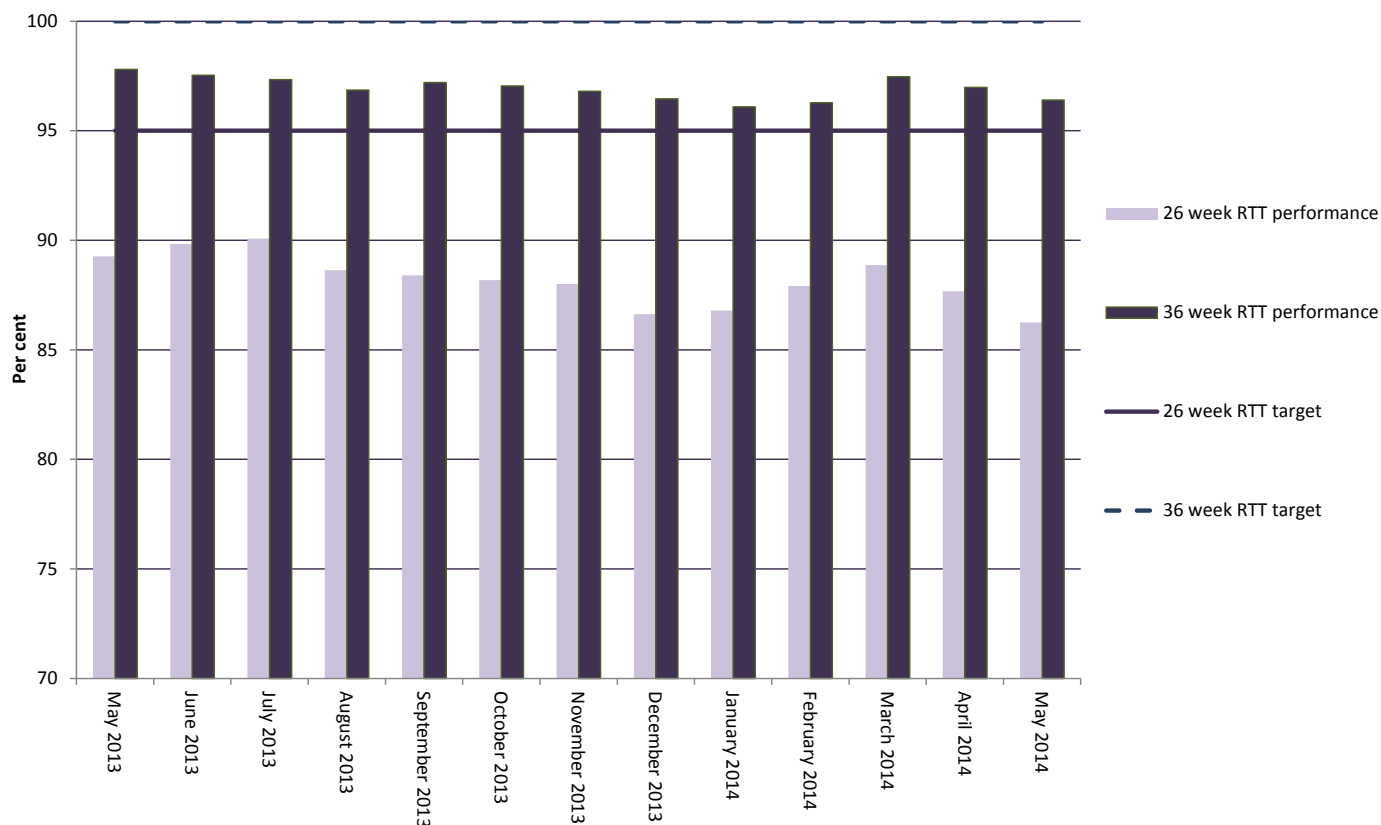
Notes:

- (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.
- (c) The Welsh Government has issued revised figures for December 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 14 July 2014]

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 14 July 2014]

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



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

Notes – See notes from Table

## 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 14 July 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 14 July 2014]



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

**Table 3: Waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic specialty at end of May 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	7,455	71.7	9,315	89.6	10,398
Aneurin Bevan	10,574	78.2	12,498	92.5	13,517
Betsi Cadwaladr	7,818	68.3	9,985	87.2	11,453
Cardiff and Vale	7,368	84.3	8,509	97.4	8,736
Cwm Taf	3,735	81.4	4,407	96.0	4,589
Hywel Dda	5,712	70.7	7,004	86.7	8,082
Powys	425	96.6	440	100.0	440
<b>Wales</b>	<b>43,087</b>	<b>75.3</b>	<b>52,158</b>	<b>91.2</b>	<b>57,215</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 April 2014 equal to or above that needed to achieve the waiting time targets.

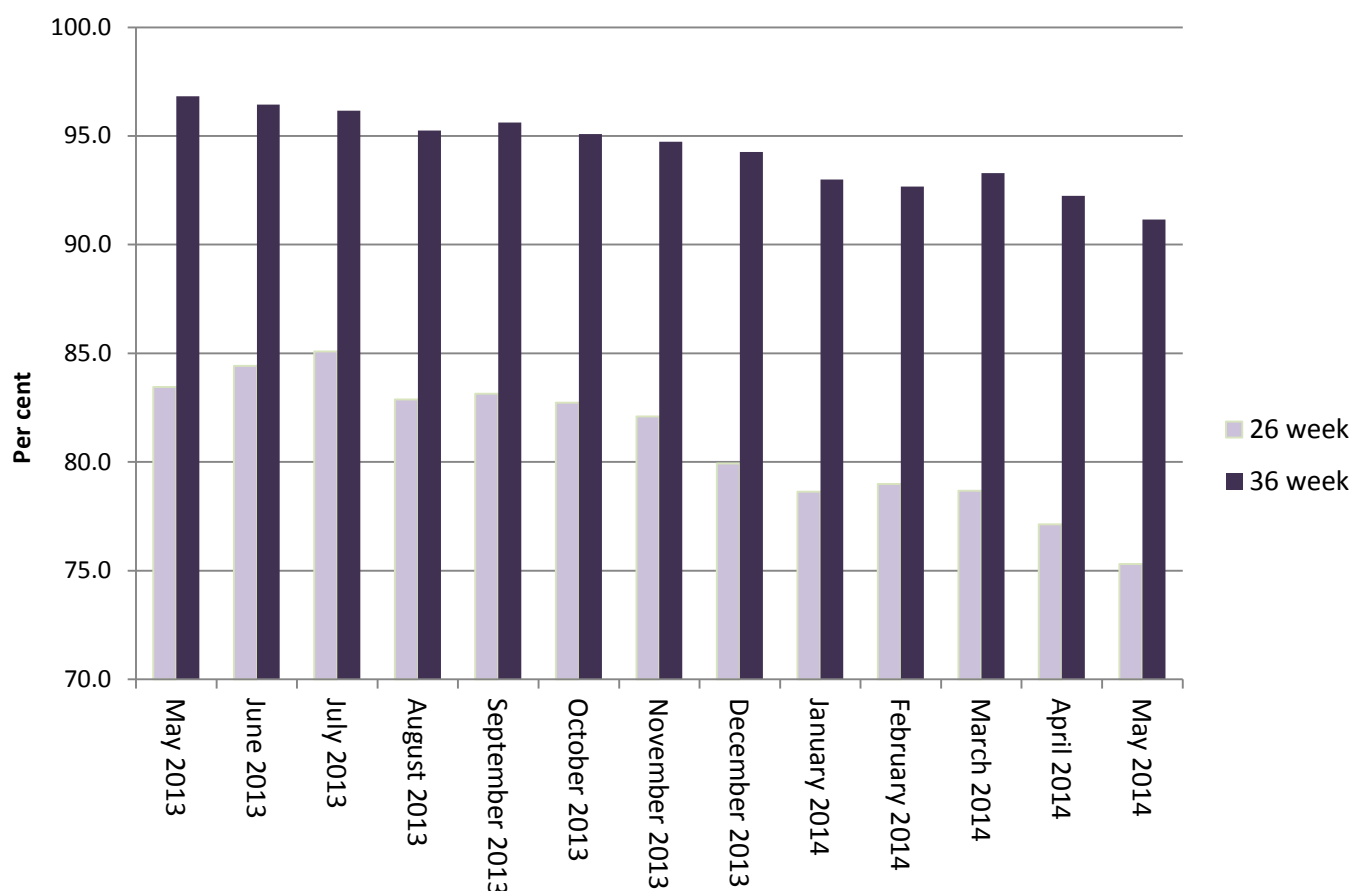
In May 2014, it can be seen that:

- **In Powys Teaching Health Board** over 95 per cent of patients were waiting less than 26 weeks. In all other LHBs, less than 85 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 weeks was **Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board**.
- The LHB with the lowest percentage of patients waiting under 36 weeks was **Hywel Dda 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 April 2013 to April 2014.

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 May 2013 to May 2014.

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



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

- For each month since May 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 May 2014 was 1.8 percentage points lower than April 2014, and was the 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 May 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 May 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 1.0 percentage point compared to April 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government, Stats Wales, [Patients waiting to start treatment by month and grouped weeks](#) [accessed 14 July 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, May 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: 14/1913**