



NORTHERN IRELAND WAITING TIME STATISTICS: OUTPATIENT WAITING TIMES QUARTER ENDING DECEMBER 2011

This publication presents information on waiting times for a first outpatient assessment in Northern Ireland at 31st December 2011. It details information on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting, for a first appointment at a consultant led outpatient service and Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS) at Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland. This information reports on performance against the 2011/12 Ministerial waiting time target which states that at least 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks, and no patient should wait longer than 21 weeks, for a first outpatient appointment. Data are presented by HSC Trust, specialty and time band. The number of completed outpatient attendances is also presented by HSC Trust.

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Outpatient Waiting Time Statistics in Northern Ireland

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Key Points

- The number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment at the end of December 2011 stood at 124,100, 6,683 (-5.1%) less than at the end of September 2011 (130,783) and 489 (-0.4%) less than at the end of December 2010 (124,589) (Figure 1 & Table 1).
- At the end of December 2011, 47.8% (59,378) of the total number waiting were waiting more than nine weeks, compared with 45.1% (58,961 out of 130,783 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of September 2011 and 43.7% (54,472 out of 124,589 total patients waiting) at the end of December 2010 (Figure 5 & Table 3b).
- The number of patients waiting more than 21 weeks at the end of December 2011 was 24,720, 19.9% of the total number waiting (Table 4). This compared with 22,492 waiting more than 21 weeks at the end of September 2011, 17.2% of the total number waiting.
- When attendances from Health Service hospitals and Health Service commissioned Independent Sector activity is combined, it is estimated that approximately 121,573 outpatients attended a first outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland during the quarter October to December 2011 (Figure 10 & Table 5).
- There were 6,443 patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment at the end of December 2011. This was 30 (-0.5%) less than at the end of September 2011 (6,473) and 240 (+3.9%) more than at the end of December 2010 (6,203) (Figure 11 & Table 8).
- A total of 17.7% (1,141) of patients were waiting longer than nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, with 280 of these patients waiting more than 21 weeks (Figures 13 & 15 & Tables 9a & 9b).

Reader Information

Purpose	Report on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting for consultant led and ICATS outpatient services at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland.
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Hospital Information Branch (HIB)

Hospital Information Branch is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the Health & Social Care (HSC) Trusts and the HSC Board. Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic patient level administrative systems and pre-defined EXCEL survey return templates.

The Head of the Branch is the Principal Statistician, Mrs. Laura Smyth. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the HSC Committee, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within the DHSSPS, other Health organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations as well as the general public. The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the HSC system, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, development of service frameworks as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a significantly high volume of Parliamentary / Assembly questions and ad-hoc queries each year.

Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications, including: Inpatient Activity, Outpatient Activity, Emergency Care, Mental Health & Learning Disability and Waiting Time Statistics (Inpatient, Outpatient, Diagnostics and Cancer). A detailed list of these publications is available from:

Website: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats.htm

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Technical Notes

This statistics release is the fifth of a quarterly data series presenting information on waiting times for outpatient services at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. Prior to the Quarter Ending (QE) December 2010, this information on the number of patients waiting for outpatient services, and the length of time they were waiting at the end of each quarter, as well as information on completed outpatient waits during the quarter, was included within the NI Waiting List publication. This publication has now been discontinued.

Data Collection

The information presented in this bulletin derives from a series of statistical returns (listed below) provided by HSC Trusts and the HSC Board.

- Departmental returns CH3, IS1, Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR), and ICATS Waiting Time Dataset.

Data providers are supplied with technical guidance documents outlining the methodologies that should be used in the collection, reporting and validation of each of these data returns. These documents can be accessed at the following link:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/hib_guidance_manuals.htm

Rounding

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place and as a consequence some percentages may not sum to 100.

Data Quality

All information provided by HSC Trusts that is presented in this bulletin has been validated and quality assured by HSC Trusts prior to publication. HSC Trusts are given a set period of time to submit the information to HIB. Following submission, HIB perform a series of checks to verify that information is consistent both within and across returns. Trend analyses are used to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Queries arising from validation checks are presented to HSC Trusts for clarification and if required returns may be amended and/or re-submitted.

Finally, prior to the publication of this information the data is presented to HSC Trusts for final sign-off.

Information on completed waits within the Independent Sector is provided by the HSC Board, split by commissioning HSC Trust (the HSC Trust responsible for the patient's waiting time). HSC Trusts are provided with guidance, detailing how they should record details of patients transferred to the Independent Sector for assessment, on their Patient Administrative System. Following assessment, the Independent Sector provider informs the transferring HSC Trust who records the patient's outpatient wait as being complete. These records are then validated against financial invoices received by the HSC Trust from the Independent Sector provider for each transferred patient. HSC Trusts then submit these data to the HSC Board who forward the information to Hospital Information Branch for inclusion in the publication. These data are not National Statistics and have not been validated by the Department; however, they have been published to provide users with a comprehensive view of completed outpatient waits during each quarter.

Main Uses of Data

Data contained in this release are published primarily to provide an indication of HSC performance. They allow the general public and the DHSSPS Health Committee to assess the performance of the DHSSPS, the HSC Board and HSC Trusts in providing timely access to hospital services in Northern Ireland. These data also provide policy makers with the necessary information to formulate and evaluate health services and are helpful in assessing the effectiveness of resource allocation in providing services that are fully responsive to patients needs. Additionally, hospital waiting time information is used to inform the media, special interest groups and academics, and by the DHSSPS to respond to parliamentary / assembly questions and ad hoc queries from the public. An additional aim of this publication is to make waiting times information publicly available to those people using health services in Northern Ireland. Further advice on uses for these data is outlined in Appendix 2 of this publication.

Waiting Time Information Elsewhere in the United Kingdom

While it is our intention to direct users to waiting time information elsewhere in the UK, users should be aware that hospital waiting times in other administrations are not always measured in a comparable manner to those in Northern Ireland. Details of the hospital waiting times published elsewhere in the UK can be found as detailed below.

England

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_132263

Scotland

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2011-11-29/2011-11-29-WT-IPDCOP-Summary.pdf?9289187193>

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/120112sdr72012en.pdf>

A National Statistics Publication

National Statistics are produced to a high professional standard set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to:

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Waiting Times for Outpatient Services

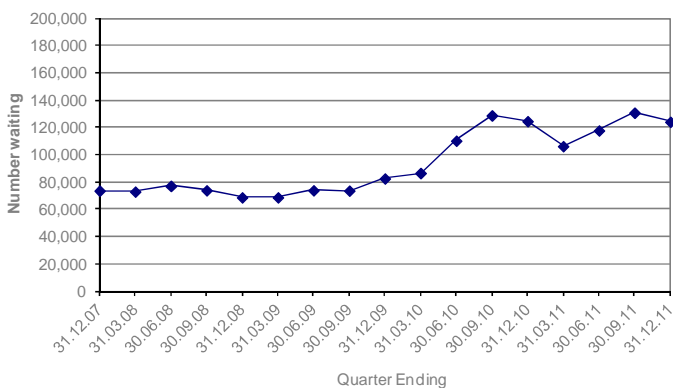
Consultant-led Outpatient Services

Data contained in this publication relates to the waiting times for a first outpatient assessment in services within HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland at 31st December 2011. An outpatient appointment is to enable a patient to see a consultant, a member of their team or locum for such a member, in respect of one referral.

Total patients waiting¹

The number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment at the end of December 2011 stood at 124,100, which is 6,683 (-5.1%) less than at the end of September 2011 (130,783) and 489 (-0.4%) less than at the end of December 2010 (124,589) (Figure 1 & Table 1).

Figure 1: Total number of patients waiting: Quarterly trends 31st December 2007 – 31st December 2011¹

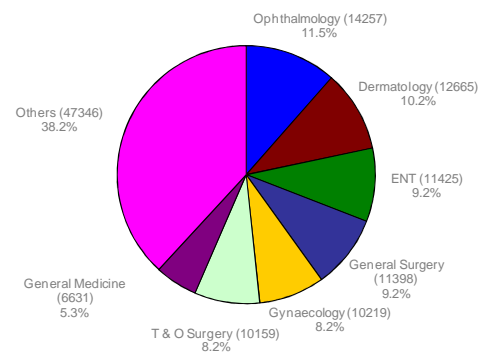


Source: Departmental Return CH3

Total Patients Waiting by Specialty¹

Just over six tenths of the 124,100 (61.8%, 76,754) patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment were within seven specialties: Ophthalmology; Dermatology; Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Gynaecology; T & O Surgery; and General Medicine (Figure 2 & Table 2a).

Figure 2: Total number of patients waiting by specialty at 31st December 2011



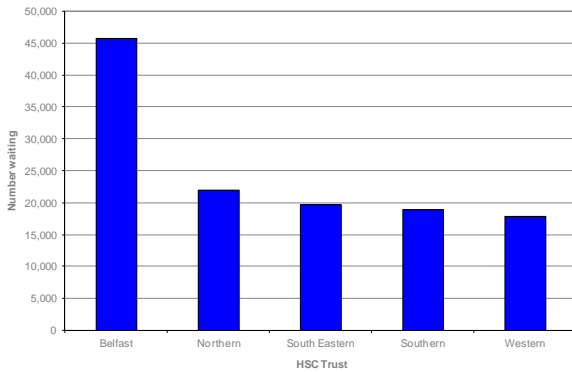
Source: Departmental Return CH3

Total Patients Waiting by HSC Trust¹

Nearly two fifths (36.8%, 45,705) of patients waiting for a first appointment were waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust. A further 17.7% (22,010) of those waiting were waiting in the Northern HSC Trust, 15.8% (19,633) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 15.3% (18,945) in the Southern HSC Trust and 14.3% (17,807) in the Western HSC Trust (Figure 3 & Table 3a).

¹ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3

Figure 3: Total number of patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31st December 2011



Source: Departmental Return CH3

Data users should be aware that many outpatient services are not provided at each of the five HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. In such circumstances patients from one HSC Trust area will be waiting to be seen at a service provided at another HSC Trust. It is therefore not possible to accurately calculate the number of patients waiting per head of the population in any specific HSC Trust area, as HSC Trusts that provide services for the whole of Northern Ireland will have a higher number of patients waiting per head of the population, than those that provide more localised services.

Patients waiting longer than the 2011/12 maximum waiting time target²

The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, states that from April 2011, at least 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 21 weeks.

Figure 4: HSC Trust performance against the 2011/12 waiting times target for a consultant-led first appointment

HSC Trust	Target Achieved	
	At least 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks	No patient waiting longer than 21 weeks
Belfast	Yes	No
Northern	No	No
South Eastern	Yes	No
Southern	Yes	No
Western	Yes	No
Northern Ireland	Yes	No

Source: Departmental Return CH3

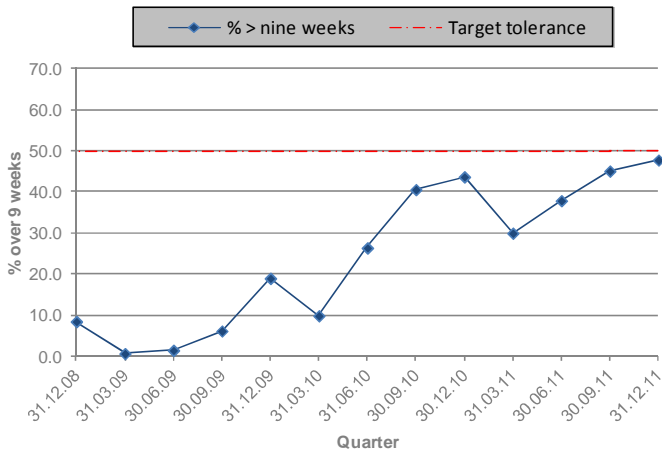
At the end of December 2011, Northern Ireland, as a whole, met the target that at least 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a consultant led first appointment. Each of the HSC Trusts met this target, except for the Northern HSC Trust (Figure 4, 6 & Table 3b). Northern Ireland, overall, did not meet the target that there should be no patient waiting longer than 21 weeks. All Trusts had patients waiting longer than 21 weeks at the end of December 2011 (Figures 4, 8 & Table 3a).

Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks²

Achievement of the 9 week target requires that less than 50% of patients should be waiting over nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment. At the quarter ending December 2011, 47.8% of patients waited more than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment (59,378 out of a total of 124,100), compared with 45.1% (58,961 out of 130,783 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of September 2011 and 43.7% (54,472 out of 124,589 total patients waiting) at the end of December 2010 (Figure 5 & Table 3b).

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5

Figure 5: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st December 2008 – 31st December 2011



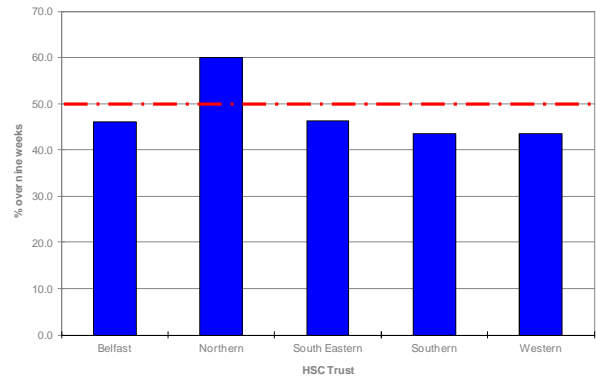
Source: Departmental Return CH3

Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks by HSC Trust²

Given that outpatient services are not provided on a uniform basis across all HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland, a more accurate gauge of HSC Trust performance for patients waiting over the maximum waiting time is the proportion of total waiters within each HSC Trust waiting longer than the maximum waiting time.

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks was 60.0% at the Northern HSC Trust, 46.3% at the South Eastern HSC Trust, 46.1% at the Belfast HSC Trust, 43.5% at the Western HSC Trust, and 43.4% at the Southern HSC Trust (Figure 6 and Table 3b).

Figure 6: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st December 2011



Source: Departmental Return CH3

Patients waiting longer than 21 weeks³

At the end of December 2011, the number of patients waiting more than 21 weeks for a first outpatient appointment was 24,720, compared to 22,492 waiting at the end of September 2011 (Table 4).

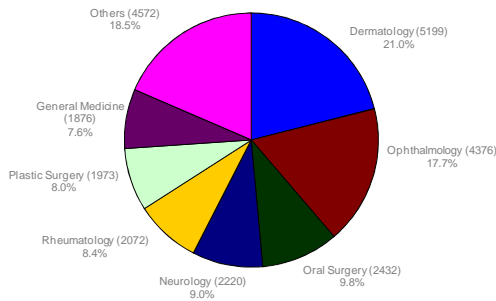
Patients waiting longer than 21 weeks by specialty³

Over four fifths (81.5%, 20,148) of the 24,720 patients waiting more than 21 weeks were within seven specialties: Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Oral Surgery, Neurology, Rheumatology, Plastic Surgery, and General Medicine (Figure 7 & Table 2a).

² Refer to Explanatory Note 1-5

³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-6

Figure 7: Patients waiting over 21 weeks by speciality at 31st December 2011

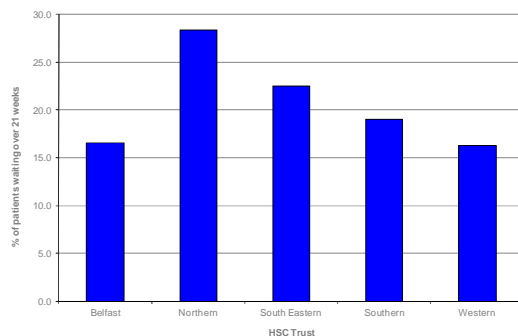


Source: Departmental Return CH3

Proportion of patients waiting longer than 21 weeks by HSC Trust³

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 21 weeks was 28.4% (6,250) at the Northern HSC Trust, 22.5% (4,415) at the South Eastern HSC Trust, 19.0% (3,602) at the Southern HSC Trust, 16.5% (7,556) at the Belfast HSC Trust and 16.3% (2,897) at the Western HSC Trust (Figure 8 & Table 3b).

Figure 8: Proportion of patients waiting over 21 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st December 2011



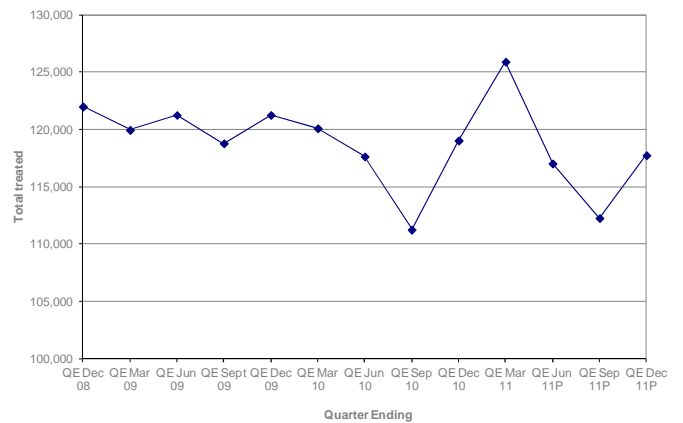
Source: Departmental Return CH3

Completed Waits within Health Service Hospitals⁴

The number of completed outpatient waits, for patients treated within Health Service (HSC) hospitals in Northern Ireland, is shown in Tables 5 - 7. The total number of completed waits each quarter, within HSC hospitals, is derived as the total number of attendances at a first outpatient appointment (Figure 9 and Table 5).

During the quarter ending the 31st December 2011, 117,735 patients attended a first outpatient appointment in a Health Service hospital, compared with 112,255 in the quarter ending 30th September 2011 (an increase of 4.9%) and 119,025 in the quarter ending 31st December 2010 (down 1.1%).

Figure 9: Total number of completed waits in Health Service hospitals: Quarterly trends QE December 2008 – QE December 2011^P



Source: Departmental Return QOAR.
^PProvisional

Completed Waits within Independent Sector⁴

During the December 2011 quarter, a number of patients attended a first outpatient appointment, commissioned

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-6

⁴Refer to Explanatory Notes 7 & 8

by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector. The number of such patients attending a first outpatient appointment within the Independent Sector has been provided by the Health and Social Care Board, split by commissioning HSC Trust (the HSC Trust responsible for the patient's waiting time). HSC Trusts are provided with guidance, detailing how they should record details of patients transferred to the Independent Sector for assessment, on their Patient Administrative System. Following assessment, the Independent Sector provider informs the transferring HSC Trust who records the patient's outpatient wait as being complete. These records are then validated against financial invoices received by the HSC Trust from the Independent Sector provider for each transferred patient. HSC Trusts then submit these data to the HSC Board who forward the information to Hospital Information Branch for inclusion in the publication. These data are not National Statistics; however, they have been published to provide users with a comprehensive view of completed outpatient waits during each quarter (Table 6).

During the quarter ending December 2011, 3,838 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, within the Independent Sector. This is an increase on the quarter ending September 2011 (617), but a decrease on the same quarter of the previous year (7,063) (Table 5).

Completed Waits Including Independent Sector Activity⁴

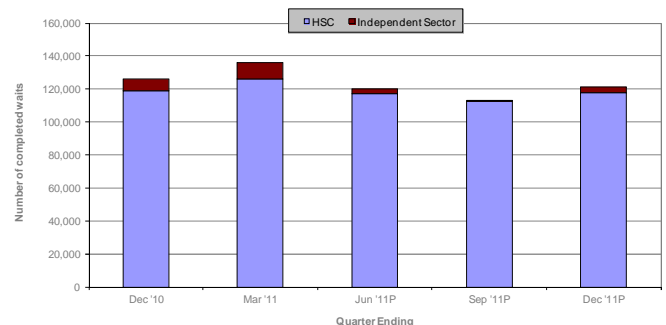
When the total number of completed outpatient waits commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector, during the quarter ending December 2011 (3,838) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 7 & 8

outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals during the same period (117,735), it is estimated that approximately 121,573 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland for an assessment commissioned by the Health Service (Tables 5 & 6)

Approximately 37.5% (45,626) of all completed waits for the quarter ending 31st December 2011 occurred in the Belfast HSC Trust, with 17.7% (21,459), 16.6% (20,130), 15.7% (19,036) and 12.6% (15,322) occurring in the Western, South Eastern, Southern and Northern HSC Trusts respectively (Table 6). There has been a 7.7% (+8,701) increase in the total number of completed outpatient waits between September 2011 (112,872) and December 2011 (121,573) with a decrease of 3.6% (4,515) compared to September 2010 (126,088) (Figure 10 & Table 7).

Figure 10: Completed outpatient waits including Independent Sector activity: Quarterly trends QE December 2010 – QE December 2011^P



Source: Departmental Return QOAR and IS1 Part 1
^PData are currently provisional

Between the quarters ending December 2010 and December 2011, there have been frequent variations in the total number of completed outpatient waits commissioned by the Health Service.

The increase in overall activity between the quarters ending September 2011 and December 2011 was due to rises in both in-house and Independent Sector activity (from 112,255 to 117,735 and 617 to 3,838 respectively).

Similarly, between the quarters ending December 2010 and December 2011 there was a fall in both types of activity, though the decrease in Independent Sector activity (from 7,063 to 3,838) contributed more to the drop in the total number of completed waits than did the reduction which took place in health service hospitals (from 119,025 to 117,735).

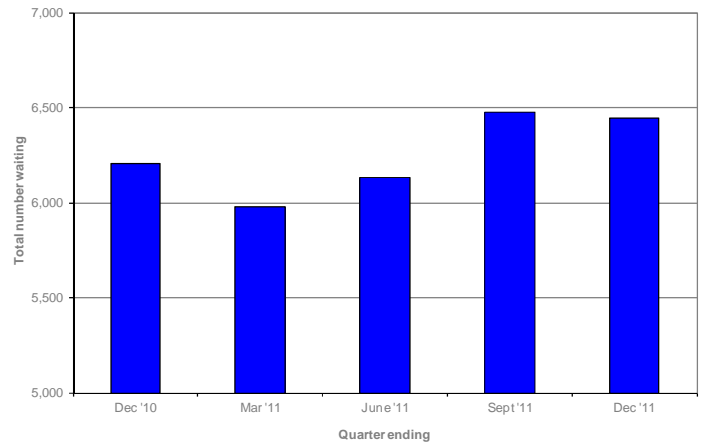
Waiting Times for a first Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service (ICATS) Tier 2 Appointment⁵

During the December 2011 quarter, a number of patients were waiting for a Tier 2 appointment within Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS). ICATS is the term used for a range of services for patients, which are provided by integrated multi-disciplinary teams of health service professionals, including GPs with special interest, specialist nurses and allied health professionals. They are provided in a variety of primary, community and secondary care settings and include assessment, treatment, diagnostic and advisory services.

There were 6,443 patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment at the end of December 2011. This was 30 (-0.5%) less than at the end of September 2011 (6,473) and 240 (+3.9%) more than at the end of the same quarter last year (6,203) (Figure 11 & Table 8)

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-11

Figure 11: Total number of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment: Quarterly trends 31st December 2010 – 31st December 2011

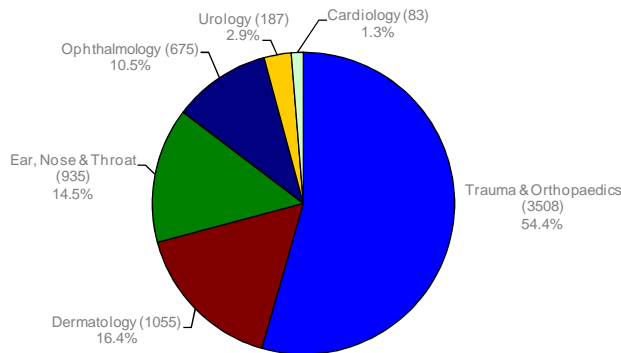


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

Total Patients Waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 Appointment by Specialty⁵

The majority (54.4%, 3,508) of those waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment were waiting for an appointment within the Trauma & Orthopaedics specialty, followed by Dermatology (16.4%, 1,055), ENT (14.5%, 935) and Ophthalmology (10.5%, 675). Only a small proportion of those waiting were within the Urology (2.9%, 187) and Cardiology specialties (1.3%, 83) (Figure 12 & Table 9a).

Figure 12: Total number of ICATS patients waiting by specialty at 31st December 2011



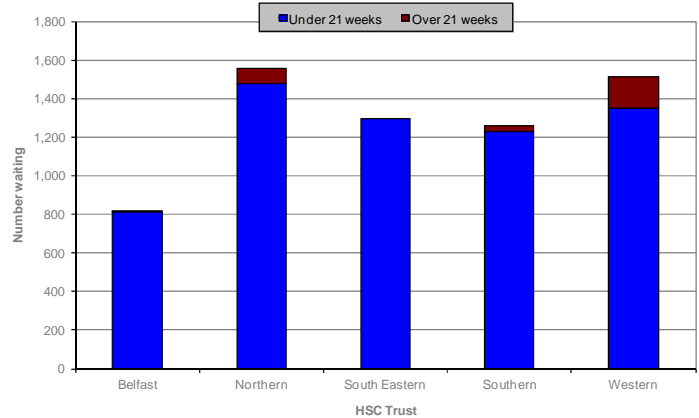
Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

Total Patients Waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 Appointment by HSC Trust⁵

Almost half of those waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment were waiting in the Northern (24.1%, 1,554) and Western (23.5%, 1,513) HSC Trusts. A further 20.1% (1,297) and 19.6% (1,260) were waiting in the South Eastern and Southern HSC Trusts respectively, with 12.7% (819) waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust (Figure 13 & Table 10a).

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-11

Figure 13: Total number of ICATS patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31st December 2011

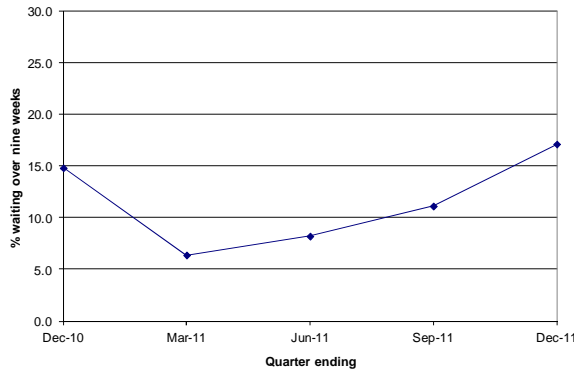


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment⁵

At the end of December 2011, 17.7% of patients were waiting longer than nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment (1,141 out of 6,443 patients), compared with 11.1% (719 out of 6,473 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of September 2011 and 14.8% (918 out of 6,203 total patients waiting) at the end of December 2010 (Figure 14 & Table 10a).

Figure 14: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks for a first Tier 2 ICATS appointment: Quarterly trends 31st December 2010 – 31st December 2011

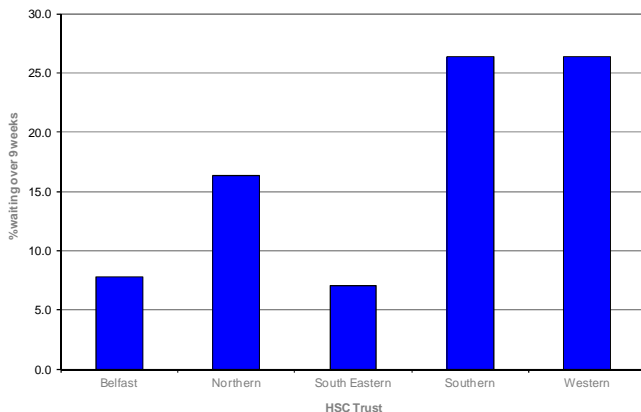


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by HSC Trust⁵

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for an ICATS appointment was 26.4% at the Southern HSC Trust, 26.4% at the Western HSC Trust, 16.3% at the Northern HSC Trust, 7.8% at the Belfast HSC Trust and 7.0% at the South Eastern HSC Trust (Figure 15 and Table 10b).

Figure 15: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks for a first Tier 2 ICATS appointment by HSC Trust



Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-11

Patients waiting longer than 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2⁶

At the end of December 2011 there were 280 patients waiting longer than 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, an increase of 205 on the quarter ending 30th September 2011 (75) (Table 11).

Patients waiting longer than 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by Specialty⁶

Of those patients waiting over 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, nearly six tenths (58.9%, 165) were waiting in the ENT specialty, with a further 22.9 (64) waiting in the Dermatology specialty. Only 9.3%, 6.8% and 2.1% were waiters in the Cardiology (26), Ophthalmology (19) and Trauma and Orthopaedics (6) specialties. There were no patients waiting longer than 21 weeks in the urology specialty (Table 9a).

Proportion of patients waiting longer than 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by HSC Trust⁶

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment was 10.8% (164) at the Western HSC Trust, 5.0% (78) at the Northern HSC Trust, 2.5% (31) at the Southern HSC Trust and 0.9% (7) at the Belfast HSC Trust. There were no patients waiting longer than 21 weeks in the South Eastern HSC Trust.

⁶ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-12

Consultant-led Outpatient Services

Table 1 Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 31st December 2011¹

	Quarter Ending December 2011	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total Waiting	124,100	-6,683	-489

Source: Departmental Return CH3

¹ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 – 3

Table 2a Number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st December 2011²

Specialty	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting						Total Number of Patients Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26	
Ophthalmology	3,741	1,590	1,994	2,556	1,115	3,261	14,257
Dermatology	3,112	1,049	1,179	2,126	1,141	4,058	12,665
ENT	4,926	1,952	1,824	1,725	291	707	11,425
General Surgery	6,640	2,080	1,245	1,054	364	15	11,398
Gynaecology	4,393	1,785	1,679	1,849	468	45	10,219
T & O Surgery	4,574	1,932	1,862	1,467	177	147	10,159
General Medicine	2,408	798	729	820	292	1,584	6,631
Other: -	17,286	6,456	5,450	7,099	2,473	8,582	47,346
Oral Surgery	1,240	602	688	1,136	390	2,042	6,098
Neurology	1,347	617	680	1,028	537	1,683	5,892
Rheumatology	1,335	554	591	935	418	1,654	5,487
Paediatrics	2,249	921	475	491	87	78	4,301
Cardiology	2,033	694	341	422	125	214	3,829
Urology	1,627	559	503	628	241	69	3,627
Plastic Surgery	515	220	307	417	202	1,771	3,432
Gastroenterology	1,200	462	403	385	15	8	2,473
Pain Management	857	338	258	270	122	123	1,968
Thoracic Medicine	797	290	257	182	76	97	1,699
Restorative Dentistry	486	251	278	474	130	50	1,669
Dental Medicine Specialties	219	79	118	205	60	444	1,125
Geriatric Medicine	560	106	79	157	16	5	923
Other	2,821	763	472	369	54	344	4,823
All Specialties	47,080	17,642	15,962	18,696	6,321	18,399	124,100

Source: Departmental Return CH3

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 6

Table 2b Percentage of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st December 2011²

Specialty	% Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
Ophthalmology	26.2%	11.2%	14.0%	17.9%	7.8%	22.9%
Dermatology	24.6%	8.3%	9.3%	16.8%	9.0%	32.0%
ENT	43.1%	17.1%	16.0%	15.1%	2.5%	6.2%
General Surgery	58.3%	18.2%	10.9%	9.2%	3.2%	0.1%
Gynaecology	43.0%	17.5%	16.4%	18.1%	4.6%	0.4%
T & O Surgery	45.0%	19.0%	18.3%	14.4%	1.7%	1.4%
General Medicine	36.3%	12.0%	11.0%	12.4%	4.4%	23.9%
Other: -	36.5%	13.6%	11.5%	15.0%	5.2%	18.1%
Oral Surgery	20.3%	9.9%	11.3%	18.6%	6.4%	33.5%
Neurology	22.9%	10.5%	11.5%	17.4%	9.1%	28.6%
Rheumatology	24.3%	10.1%	10.8%	17.0%	7.6%	30.1%
Paediatrics	52.3%	21.4%	11.0%	11.4%	2.0%	1.8%
Cardiology	53.1%	18.1%	8.9%	11.0%	3.3%	5.6%
Urology	44.9%	15.4%	13.9%	17.3%	6.6%	1.9%
Plastic Surgery	15.0%	6.4%	8.9%	12.2%	5.9%	51.6%
Gastroenterology	48.5%	18.7%	16.3%	15.6%	0.6%	0.3%
Pain Management	43.5%	17.2%	13.1%	13.7%	6.2%	6.3%
Thoracic Medicine	46.9%	17.1%	15.1%	10.7%	4.5%	5.7%
Restorative Dentistry	29.1%	15.0%	16.7%	28.4%	7.8%	3.0%
Dental Medicine Specialties	19.5%	7.0%	10.5%	18.2%	5.3%	39.5%
Geriatric Medicine	60.7%	11.5%	8.6%	17.0%	1.7%	0.5%
Other	58.5%	15.8%	9.8%	7.7%	1.1%	7.1%
All Specialties	37.9%	14.2%	12.9%	15.1%	5.1%	14.8%

Source: Departmental Return CH3

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 5

Table 3a Number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st December 2011²

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting						Total Number of Patients Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26	
Belfast	17,586	7,027	6,470	7,066	1,933	5,623	45,705
Northern	6,382	2,411	2,699	4,268	1,687	4,563	22,010
South Eastern	7,750	2,785	2,221	2,462	967	3,448	19,633
Southern	7,934	2,794	2,215	2,400	1,041	2,561	18,945
Western	7,428	2,625	2,357	2,500	693	2,204	17,807
Total	47,080	17,642	15,962	18,696	6,321	18,399	124,100

Source: Departmental Return CH3

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 5

Table 3b Percentage of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st December 2011²

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
Belfast	38.5%	15.4%	14.2%	15.5%	4.2%	12.3%
Northern	29.0%	11.0%	12.3%	19.4%	7.7%	20.7%
South Eastern	39.5%	14.2%	11.3%	12.5%	4.9%	17.6%
Southern	41.9%	14.7%	11.7%	12.7%	5.5%	13.5%
Western	41.7%	14.7%	13.2%	14.0%	3.9%	12.4%
Total	37.9%	14.2%	12.9%	15.1%	5.1%	14.8%

Source: Departmental Return CH3

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 5

Table 4 Patients waiting over 21 weeks for a first outpatient appointment – 31st December 2011³

	Quarter Ending December 2011	Change compared with end of previous quarter
Total waiting over 21 weeks	24,720	+2,228

Source: Departmental Return CH3

³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 6

Table 5 Completed outpatient waits: QE June 2008 – QE December 2011⁴

Quarter	Total Number of Completed Outpatient Waits Within Health Service Hospitals	Total Number of Completed Outpatient Waits in Independent Sector*	Total Number of Completed Outpatient Waits Commissioned by Health Service
A - J 2008	121,147	5,087	126,234
J - S 2008	112,610	7,173	119,783
O - D 2008	121,985	10,354	132,339
J - M 2009	119,942	13,260	133,202
A - M 2008/9	475,684	35,874	511,558
A - J 2009	121,244	13,246	134,490
J - S 2009	118,770	12,799	131,569
O - D 2009	121,245	2,202	123,447
J - M 2010	120,086	11,241	131,327
A - M 2009/10	481,345	39,488	520,833
A - J 2010 ^R	117,626	869	118,495
J - S 2010 ^R	111,241	337	111,578
O - D 2010 ^R	119,025	7,063	126,088
J - M 2011 ^R	125,901	10,111	136,012
A - M 2010/11	473,793	18,380	492,173
A - J 2011 ^{RP}	117,012	3,291	120,303
J - S 2011 ^{RP}	112,255	617	112,872
O - D 2011 ^P	117,735	3,838	121,573

Source: Departmental Return QOAR and IS1 part 1.

^R Data have been revised ^P Data are currently provisional

* Not National Statistics

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 7 & 8

Table 6 Completed outpatient waits by HSC Trust including Independent Sector activity – QE December 2011⁴

Provider Trust	Number of Completed Outpatient Waits within Health Service Hospitals ^P	Number of Completed Outpatient Waits in Independent Sector ^{P*}	Total Number of Completed Outpatient Waits Commissioned by Health Service ^P
Belfast	42,305	3,321	45,626
Northern	15,322	0	15,322
South Eastern	20,130	0	20,130
Southern	18,888	148	19,036
Western	21,090	369	21,459
Total Treated	117,735	3,838	121,573

Source: Departmental Returns QOAR and IS1 part 1

^P Data are currently provisional

* Not National Statistics

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 7 & 8

Table 7 Completed outpatient waits by HSC Trust including Independent Sector activity – QE December 2010 - QE December 2011⁴

Provider Trust	Total Number of Completed Outpatient Waits Commissioned by Health Service				
	QE December 2010	QE March 2011	QE June 2011 ^{RP}	QE September 2011 ^{RP}	QE December 2011 ^P
Belfast	51,522	51,918	45,953	40,639	45,626
Northern	15,515	16,106	15,235	14,409	15,322
South Eastern	20,174	23,479	19,505	19,451	20,130
Southern	19,295	22,371	19,534	18,123	19,036
Western	19,582	22,138	20,076	20,250	21,459
Total	126,088	136,012	120,303	112,872	121,573

Source: Departmental Returns QOAR and IS1 part 1

^R Data have been revised

^P Data are currently provisional

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 7 & 8

Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services

Table 8 Quarterly ICATS waiting lists – 31st December 2011⁵

	Quarter Ending December 2011	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total Waiting	6,443	-30	+240

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 - 11

Table 9a Number of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st December 2011⁵

Specialty	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting						Total Number of Patients Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26	
Urology	65	39	38	45	0	0	187
Trauma & Orthopaedics	2,703	666	126	7	4	2	3,508
Ear, Nose & Throat	510	118	70	72	37	128	935
Ophthalmology	448	120	55	33	1	18	675
Cardiology	12	12	16	17	7	19	83
Dermatology	468	141	173	209	39	25	1,055
All Specialties	4,206	1,096	478	383	88	192	6,443

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 – 11

Table 9b Percentage of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st December 2011⁵

Specialty	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
Urology	34.8%	20.9%	20.3%	24.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Trauma & Orthopaedics	77.1%	19.0%	3.6%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Ear, Nose & Throat	54.5%	12.6%	7.5%	7.7%	4.0%	13.7%
Ophthalmology	66.4%	17.8%	8.1%	4.9%	0.1%	2.7%
Cardiology	14.5%	14.5%	19.3%	20.5%	8.4%	22.9%
Dermatology	44.4%	13.4%	16.4%	19.8%	3.7%	2.4%
All Specialties	65.3%	17.0%	7.4%	5.9%	1.4%	3.0%

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 – 11

Table 10a Number of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st December 2011⁵

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting						Total Number of Patients Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26	
Belfast	579	176	36	21	5	2	819
Northern	1,136	165	103	72	36	42	1,554
South Eastern	872	334	71	20	0	0	1,297
Southern	708	219	117	185	11	20	1,260
Western	911	202	151	85	36	128	1,513
Total	4,206	1,096	478	383	88	192	6,443

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 – 11

Table 10b Percentage of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st December 2011⁵

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
Belfast	70.7%	21.5%	4.4%	2.6%	0.6%	0.2%
Northern	73.1%	10.6%	6.6%	4.6%	2.3%	2.7%
South Eastern	67.2%	25.8%	5.5%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Southern	56.2%	17.4%	9.3%	14.7%	0.9%	1.6%
Western	60.2%	13.4%	10.0%	5.6%	2.4%	8.5%
Total	65.3%	17.0%	7.4%	5.9%	1.4%	3.0%

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 – 11

Table 11 Patients waiting over 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment – 31st December 2011⁶

	Quarter Ending December 2011	Change compared with end of previous quarter
Total waiting over 21 weeks	280	+205

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁶ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 – 12

Appendix 1: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the Departmental Returns CH3, IS1, Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR), and the ICATS Waiting Time Dataset. These returns collect information from Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health and Social Care Board on a quarterly basis.
2. Trust based information (CH3, QOAR, Departmental Return IS1 and ICATS Waiting Time Dataset) returns include all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
3. Outpatient waiters are defined as patients still waiting for their first outpatient appointment at the end of the quarter, including those who have cancelled or missed a previous appointment. An outpatient appointment is to enable a patient to see a consultant, a member of their team or locum for such a member, in respect of one referral. Waiting time for a first outpatient appointment begins on the date the HSC Trust receives a referral for a first outpatient appointment and ends on the date a patient attends a first outpatient appointment. Patients who cannot attend (CNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date they informed the HSC Trust they could not attend, while patients who do not attend (DNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date of their DNA.
4. For Tables 2, 3 and 4, and Figures 4 to 8 outpatient waiting time relates to the number of completed weeks a patient has been waiting for outpatient assessment. For example, a patient waiting exactly 6 weeks would be included in the 0-6 week timeband and a patient waiting exactly 6 weeks and 1 day would be included in the >6-9 (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) timeband.
5. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as detailed in the Schedule which is an addendum to the requirement set out in the body of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Commissioning Plan direction itself states that from April 2011, at least 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 21 weeks for a first outpatient appointment.
6. Following the issuing of the Ministerial targets for the time period April 2011 onwards, changes in the methodology used to compile official outpatient waiting time data enables the 21 week target to be monitored. However, it is not possible to produce comparable data for the quarters prior to the end of the 30th June 2011.
7. The total number of completed outpatient waits each quarter, within HSC hospitals, is derived as the total number of attendances at a first outpatient appointment from the Departmental Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR).
8. The number of patients that received an outpatient assessment, commissioned by the Health Service, in the Independent Sector is provided in Tables 5 to 7. These figures are provided by the HSC Board. They are published for each transferring Health and Social Care Trust (Trust responsible for the patient's waiting time). They are not National Statistics and they have not been validated by the Department, however, they have been included to provide users with a comprehensive view of completed outpatient waits during each quarter.
9. From 1st April 2010, a number of Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS) were officially introduced within the HSC. ICATS is the term used for a range of outpatient services for patients, which are provided by integrated multi-disciplinary teams of health service professionals, including GPs with a special interest, specialist nurses and allied health professionals. They are provided in a variety of primary, community and secondary care settings and they include assessment, treatment, diagnostic and advisory services. A first appointment at ICATS is known as a Tier 2 appointment. Waiting times for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment are measured in a similar fashion to those for a first outpatient appointment (see point 3).

10. ICATS introduced from 1st April 2010 included services in the Belfast HSCT (Ophthalmology and Dermatology), the Northern HSCT (ENT, Ophthalmology and Dermatology), the South Eastern HSCT (ENT, Ophthalmology and Dermatology), Southern HSCT (Urology, Dermatology, and Cardiology) and the Western HSCT (Urology, ENT, Ophthalmology and Cardiology). ICATS in the Trauma and Orthopaedic specialty were introduced on 1st October 2007 and are provided in all five Health and Social Care Trusts.
11. A first ICATS Tier 2 appointment is considered as a non-consultant outpatient appointment and hence these waiters are not reported along with consultant led outpatient waiters. Following ICATS Triage, patients who have not been given either discharge, advice only or referral incomplete outcomes will proceed for either a (i) first outpatient appointment, (ii) a diagnostic test or (iii) an ICATS Tier 2 appointment. Following a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment there are a number of outcomes, including a review ICATS Tier 2 appointment or a referral for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment. If the latter is the case then the outpatient waiting time starts from the date on which this referral is received by the outpatient service, i.e., it is treated as a new referral.
12. Following the issuing of the Ministerial targets for the time period April 2011 onwards, changes in the methodology used to compile official waiting time data for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment enables the 21 week target to be monitored. However, it is not possible to produce comparable data for the quarters prior to the end of the 30th June 2011.
13. HIB surveyed data providers during 2011/12 to ascertain the cost of producing, validating and submitting the information required for this publication. This relates to the time taken to generate, validate and submit data, over and above what is already required by their organisation for internal performance management purposes. The cost to data providers of compliance within HIB's requirements for this publication, based on HSC salary costs, was £3,110.
14. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety policy is to publish revised figures with subsequent statistical releases unless it is decided that the magnitude of the change merits earlier notification.
15. All of the data contained in the tables are also available on a quarterly basis and can be supplied by individual specialty or Provider HSC Trust if this level of detail is required (as in previous bulletins). In addition, quarterly data relating to outpatient and ICATS waiting times have also been published in spreadsheet format (Microsoft Excel), split by HSC Trust, Specialty and Programme of Care, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/waiting_times_main.htm
16. Figures relating to the quarter ending 31st March 2012 will be released on Thursday 24th May 2012.

Appendix 2: Data in the publication

General guidance on using the data

The data contained in the publication are presented on a quarterly basis. While seasonal impact should be minimal, it is advisable that data for the current quarter be compared with both the previous quarter (to gauge the most current direction of performance), and the same quarter in the previous year (to assess any seasonal impact).

Number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment

Description of data

Data on the number of health service patients who are waiting for a first outpatient appointment with a consultant led service at a Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in Northern Ireland.

Data provider

Data are sourced directly from HSC Trusts, via the Departmental Data Return CH3.

Data quality assessment

Very good – data are derived from a range of administrative systems. Data providers have been given in-depth guidance providing instructions for recording, collection and submission of data. In addition, variance checks are employed as an integral part of the production process, with large discrepancies between the current quarter and both the previous quarter, and the corresponding quarter in the previous year, being queried with the data provider.

Guidance on using data

- Number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment – this is the number of a patients referred to a HSC Trust for a first outpatient appointment with a consultant led service. It does not include patients waiting for a review outpatient appointment (having already been seen by the consultant) or patients waiting for a first appointment at a service provided by other health care professionals, such as nurses. Data relate to the numbers who have still to attend their appointment at the end of each quarter, and provides users with an indication of demand for HSC outpatient services. It should not be used to estimate the numbers who have attended a first outpatient appointment (completed outpatient waits).
- Lengths of time patients are waiting for a first outpatient appointment – this relates to the lengths of time patients have been waiting for their appointment at the end of the relevant quarter. Explanatory note three, in Appendix 1, explains how these waiting times are measured. This information relates to how long patients are waiting for a first outpatient appointment, not the length of time they waited before attending, also known as completed waits. Data on the total length of time patients waited before attending their first outpatient appointment are not collected.
- An assessment of both the total number waiting and the length of time patients are waiting, when compared with equivalent data for previous quarters, allow users to gauge the disparity between demand for outpatient services and the overall capacity for providing these services, both within the HSC and Independent Sector providers.
- Outpatient waiting times by HSC Trust – patients will be referred to a specific HSC Trust for outpatient assessment. Patients are reported by the HSC Trusts responsible for the service to which the patient has been referred. This is not necessarily the nearest HSC Trust to the patient's residence, as certain clinical services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust, and in the case of some specialised services, such as Plastic Surgery, services will largely be provided at a single regional centre for Northern Ireland. In some cases a consultant from one HSC Trust may provide a 'visiting' service at another HSC Trust, and so the

patient may not even be reported at the HSC Trust at which they attend. Users should therefore be cautious in how they use these data. For example, they should not be used to calculate the total number of patients waiting per head of the population residing within each HSC Trust area. Neither should the actual number of patients waiting longer than the recommended waiting time be used as indicator of poor performance within an individual HSC Trust. Users who require an indication of the latter are advised to refer to the commentary section of the publication which provides an indication of the percentage of total waiters that have been waiting over the maximum recommended waiting times, within each HSC Trust.

- Outpatient waiting times by specialty - patients will be referred for a first outpatient appointment for a specific medical condition. Following receipt of the referral by the HSC Trust, the referral will be triaged and allocated to the most suitable consultant. Each consultant employed by the HSC Trust will have an allocated specialty of employment, and it will be this specialty against which the patient's waiting time will be reported. These data provide a useful insight into the differences in both the demand for certain types of medical procedures, and also the existing capacity available to meet these demands.

Number of patients attending a first outpatient appointment (completed outpatient waits)

Description of data

Data on the number of health service patients who have attended a first outpatient appointment with a consultant led service at a Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in Northern Ireland. These data are also known as completed outpatient waits.

Data provider

Data on patients treated within HSC Trusts are sourced directly from HSC Trusts, via the Departmental Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return. Data on HSC patients treated by an Independent Sector provider are sourced from the HSC Board which is responsible for the regional commissioning of independent sector provision.

Data quality assessment

Very good – data are derived from a range of administrative systems. For data on completed outpatient waits within the HSC Trusts, data providers have been given in-depth guidance providing instructions for recording, collection and submission of data. In addition, variance checks are employed as an integral part of the production process, with large discrepancies between the current quarter and both the previous quarter, and the corresponding quarter in the previous year, being queried with the data provider. Data on completed waits within the Independent Sector are estimated from financial records held by the HSC Board. Although these are not validated and are not categorised as National Statistics, they are considered as being of very good quality.

Guidance on using data

- Number of HSC patients attending a first outpatient appointment at a HSC hospital – These data relate to the number of patients who attended a first outpatient appointment within the HSC during each quarter. Health Service patients will attend a first outpatient appointment at a HSC hospital, at either a routinely provided consultant led outpatient service, or at an additionally provided consultant led outpatient service provided by the HSC Trust, in addition to the routine services. These latter services (sometimes referred to as 'Waiting List Initiatives') are often provided in response to a specific need, such as increases in both the number of patients waiting and lengths of time waiting. Data on the number of HSC patients attending a first outpatient appointment at a HSC hospital provide users with a good indication of the capacity available within the HSC to assess outpatients.
- Number of HSC patients attending a first outpatient appointment with an Independent Sector provider – These data relate to the number of Health Service patients who received their first outpatient assessment at an outpatient service provided by the Independent Sector. Independent Sector provision is introduced when the demand for certain types of outpatient service is greater than the capacity within HSC hospitals. When this

situation results in increases in both the number of patients waiting and the length of time waiting, patients may be assessed and treated by an Independent Sector provider. The cost of assessing these patients is met by the transferring HSC Trust, who retains responsibility for the patients waiting time. Data on the number of HSC patients attending a first outpatient appointment with an Independent Sector provider, provide users with a good indication of demand for outpatient services within the HSC, exceeding available capacity.

- Total number of HSC patients attending a first outpatient appointment – this relates to the total number of HSC patients attending a first outpatient appointment irrespective of the location or provider of the treatment. This provides users with an indication of the number of patients who would previously have been on the waiting list but had been treated during the latest quarter. Data on the total number of first outpatient attendances allow users to assess the impact that the number of first attendances during the quarter have had upon the total number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment at the end of the quarter.

Number of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment

Description of data

Data on the number of health service patients who are waiting for a first Tier 2 appointment at an Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service (ICATS) at a Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in Northern Ireland.

Data provider

Data are largely sourced directly from the Patient Administration System, via a facility known as the HSC Data Warehouse, at each HSC Trust. The Southern HSCT manually supplements these data for one service.

Data quality assessment

Very good – data are derived largely from a single administrative system, with minor manual supplementation of data for the Urology ICATS service at the Southern HSCT. Data providers have been given in-depth guidance providing instructions for recording, collection and submission of data. In addition, variance checks are employed as an integral part of the production process, with large discrepancies between the current quarter and both the previous quarter, and the corresponding quarter in the previous year, being queried with the data provider.

Guidance on using data

- Number of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment – this is the number of a patients referred to a HSC Trust for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment. It does not include patients waiting for a review ICATS Tier 2 appointment (having already attended a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment) or patients waiting for a first appointment at a service led by either a consultant or another health care professional, such a nurse or an Allied Health Professional. Data relate to the numbers who have still to attend their appointment at the end of each quarter, and provides users with an indication of demand for ICATS Tier 2 services. It should not be used to estimate the numbers who have attended a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment (completed ICATS Tier 2 waits).
- Lengths of time patients are waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment – this relates to the lengths of time patients have been waiting for their appointment at the end of the relevant quarter. Explanatory note 10 in Appendix 1 explains how these waiting times are measured. This information relates to how long patients are waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, not the length of time they waited before attending, also known as completed waits. Data on the total length of time patients waited before attending their first ICATS Tier 2 appointment are not collected.
- An assessment of both the total number waiting and the length of time patients are waiting, when compared with equivalent data for previous quarters, allow users to gauge the disparity between demand for ICATS Tier 2 services and the overall capacity for providing these services within the HSC.

- ICATS Tier 2 waiting times by HSC Trust – patients will be referred to a specific HSC Trust for assessment. Patients are reported by the HSC Trusts responsible for the service to which the patient has been referred. This is not necessarily the nearest HSC Trust to the patient's residence, as certain ICATS services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust, and in the case of some specialised services. Users should therefore be cautious in how they use these data. For example, they should not be used to calculate the total number of patients waiting per head of the population residing within each Trust area. Neither should the actual number of patients waiting longer than the recommended waiting time be used as indicator of poor performance within an individual HSC Trust. Users who require an indication of the latter are advised to refer to the commentary section of the publication which provides an indication of the percentage of total waiters that have been waiting over the maximum recommended waiting times, within each HSC Trust.
- ICATS Tier 2 waiting times by specialty - patients will be referred for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment for a specific medical condition. Following receipt of the referral by the HSC Trust, the referral will be triaged and allocated to the most suitable ICATS service. Each ICATS service will be commissioned to provide services in a specific specialty and this will determine the specialty against which the patient's waiting time will be reported. These data provide a useful insight into the differences in both the demand for certain types of medical procedures, and also the existing capacity available to meet these demands within ICATS.

Further information on Outpatient Waiting Times in Northern Ireland, is available from:

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