



NORTHERN IRELAND WAITING TIME STATISTICS: OUTPATIENT WAITING TIMES QUARTER ENDING MARCH 2012

This publication presents information on waiting times for a first outpatient assessment in Northern Ireland at 31st March 2012. 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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Key Points

- The number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment at the end of March 2012 stood at 103,007, 21,093 (-17.0%) less than at the end of December 2011 (124,100) and 3,199 (-3.0%) less than at the end of March 2011 (106,206) (Figure 1 & Table 1).
- At the end of March 2012, 27.5% (28,277) of the total number waiting were waiting more than nine weeks, compared with 47.8% (59,378 out of 124,100 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of December 2011 and 30.0% (31,909 out of 106,206 total patients waiting) at the end of March 2011 (Figure 5 & Table 3b).
- The number of patients waiting more than 21 weeks at the end of March 2012 was 5,903, 5.7% of the total number waiting (Table 4). This compared with 24,720 waiting more than 21 weeks at the end of December 2011, 19.9% 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 145,562 outpatients attended a first outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland during the quarter January to March 2012 (Figure 10 & Table 5).
- There were 6,476 patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment at the end of March 2012. This was 33 (+0.5%) more than at the end of December 2011 (6,443) and 497 (+8.3%) more than at the end of March 2011 (5,979) (Figure 11 & Table 8).
- A total of 10.7% (693) of patients were waiting longer than nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, with 76 of these patients waiting more than 21 weeks (Figures 13 & 15 & Tables 9a & 9b).

Reader Information

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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 sixth 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.

On occasion the percentage of patients waiting within overall totals, or percentage changes within quarters, are

presented. In some instances these percentages are less than 0.1% or more than 99.9%. Users should be aware that, in such instances the percentage is rounded to zero or 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 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/Statistics/Performanceandstatistics/ReferraltoTreatmentstatistics/index.htm>

Scotland

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2012-02-28/2012-02-28-WT-18WksRTT-Report.pdf?36243838072>

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2012/1205101/?lang=en>

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

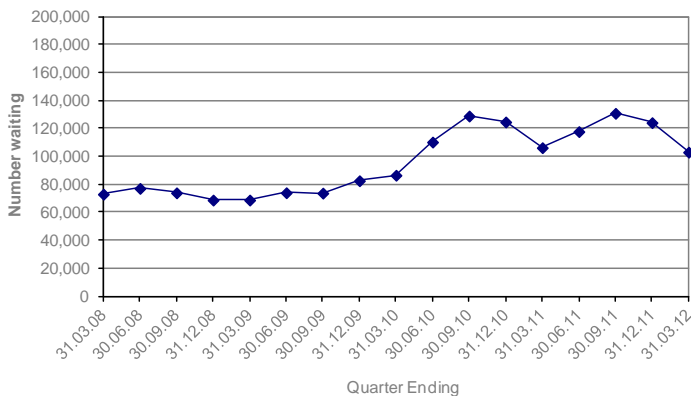
Consultant-led Outpatient Services

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 March 2012. 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 March 2012 stood at 103,007, which is 21,093 (-17.0%) less than at the end of December 2011 (124,100) and 3,199 (-3.0%) less than at the end of March 2011 (106,206) (Figure 1 & Table 1).

Figure 1: Total number of patients waiting: Quarterly trends 31st March 2008 – 31st March 2012¹

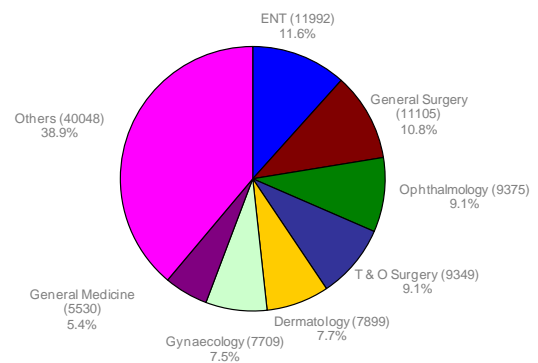


Source: Departmental Return CH3

Total Patients Waiting by Specialty¹

Just over six tenths of the 103,007 (61.1%, 62,959) patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment were within seven specialties: Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Ophthalmology; T & O Surgery; Dermatology; Gynaecology; and General Medicine (Figure 2 & Table 2a).

Figure 2: Total number of patients waiting by specialty at 31st March 2012



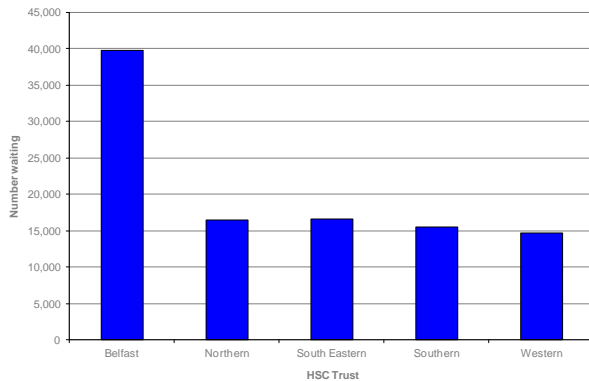
Source: Departmental Return CH3

Total Patients Waiting by HSC Trust¹

Nearly two fifths (38.6%, 39,784) of patients waiting for a first appointment were waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust. A further 16.1% (16,590) of those waiting were waiting in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 16.0% (16,487) in the Northern HSC Trust, 15.0% (15,463) in the Southern HSC Trust and 14.3% (14,683) 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 March 2012



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	Yes	No
South Eastern	Yes	No
Southern	Yes	No
Western	Yes	No
Northern Ireland	Yes	No

Source: Departmental Return CH3

At the end of March 2012, 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 (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 March 2012 (Figures 4, 8 & Table 3a). However, the Western HSC Trust only narrowly missed this target, with just three patients waiting longer than 21 weeks.

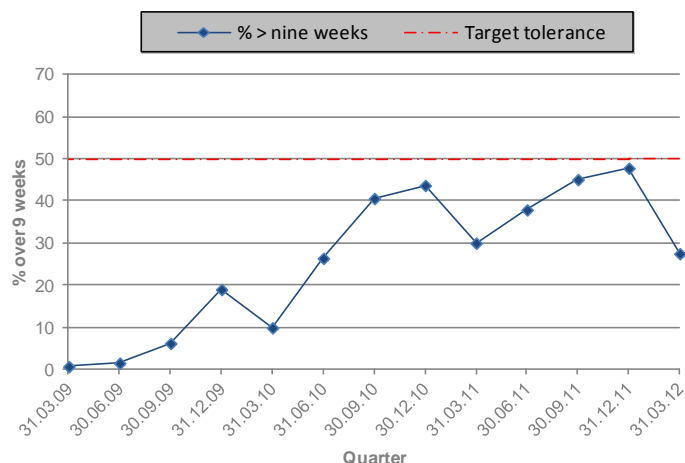
Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks²

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 March 2012, 27.5% of patients waited more than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment (28,277 out of a total of 103,007), compared with 47.8% (59,378 out of 124,100 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of December 2011 and 30.0% (31,909 out of 106,206 total

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5

patients waiting) at the end of March 2011 (Figure 5 & Table 3b).

Figure 5: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st March 2009 – 31st March 2012



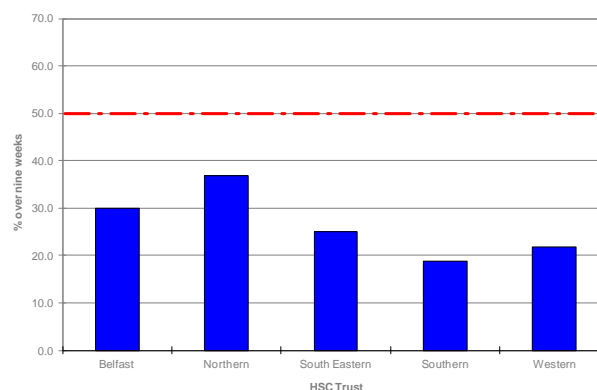
Source: Departmental Return CH3

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 36.8% at the Northern HSC Trust, 30.0% at the Belfast HSC Trust, 25.1% at the South Eastern HSC Trust, 21.8% at the Western HSC Trust, and 18.8% at the Southern HSC Trust (Figure 6 and Table 3b).

Figure 6: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st March 2012



Source: Departmental Return CH3

Patients waiting longer than 21 weeks³

At the end of March 2012, the number of patients waiting more than 21 weeks for a first outpatient appointment was 5,903, compared to 24,720 waiting at the end of December 2011 (Table 4).

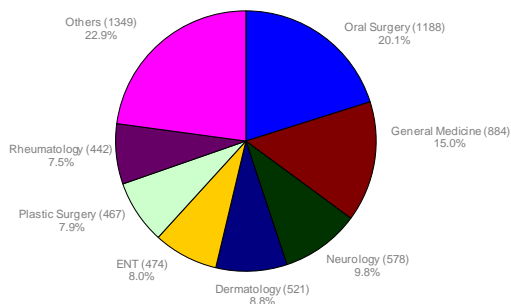
Patients waiting longer than 21 weeks by specialty³

Nearly four fifths (77.1%, 4554) of the 5,903 patients waiting more than 21 weeks were within seven specialties: Oral Surgery, General Medicine, Neurology, Dermatology, ENT, Plastic Surgery, and Rheumatology (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 March 2012

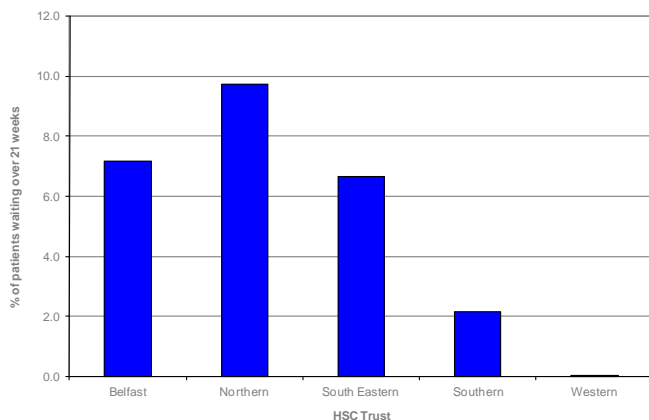


Source: Departmental Return CH3

Proportion of patients waiting longer than 21 weeks by HSC Trust³

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 21 weeks was 9.7% (1,607) at the Northern HSC Trust, 7.2% (2,858) at the Belfast HSC Trust, 6.7% (1,104) at the South Eastern HSC Trust, 2.1% (331) at the Southern HSC Trust and less than 0.1% (3) at the Western HSC Trust (Figure 8 & Table 3b).

Figure 8: Proportion of patients waiting over 21 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st March 2012



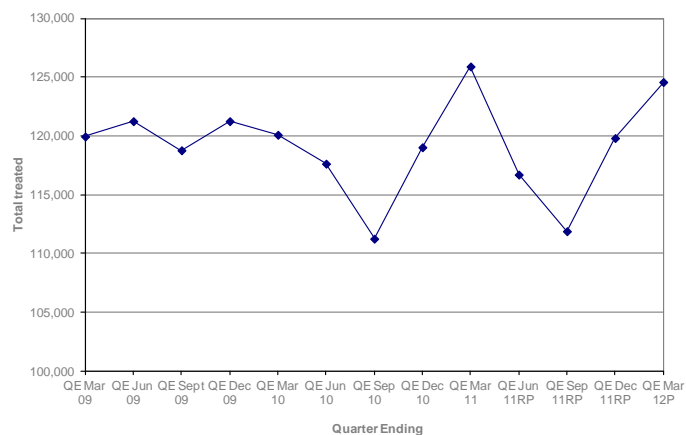
Source: Departmental Return CH3

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 March 2012, 124,578 patients attended a first outpatient appointment in a Health Service hospital, compared with 119,807 in the quarter ending 31st December 2011 (an increase of 4.0%) and 125,901 in the quarter ending 31st March 2011 (down 1.1%).

Figure 9: Total number of completed waits in Health Service hospitals: Quarterly trends QE March 2009 – QE March 2012^P



Source: Departmental Return QOAR.
^PProvisional

Completed Waits within Independent Sector⁴

During the March 2012 quarter, a number of patients attended a first

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-6

⁴Refer to Explanatory Notes 7 & 8

outpatient appointment, commissioned 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). 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 March 2012, 20,984 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, within the Independent Sector. This is an increase on both the quarter ending December 2011 (3,838), and the same quarter of the previous year (10,111) (Table 5).

Completed Waits Including Independent Sector Activity⁴

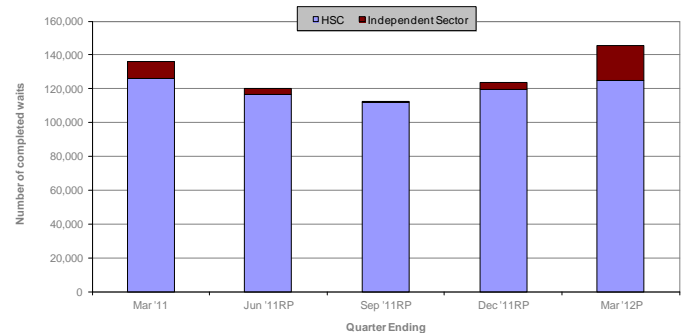
When the total number of completed outpatient waits commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector, during the quarter ending March 2012 (20,984) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals during the same period (124,578), it is estimated that approximately 145,562 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland for an assessment commissioned by the Health Service (Tables 5 & 6)

Approximately 37.4% (54,454) of all completed waits for the quarter ending 31st March 2012 occurred in the Belfast HSC Trust, with 16.4% (23,902), 16.0% (23,346), 16.0% (23,224) and 14.2% (20,636) occurring in the South Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern HSC Trusts respectively (Table 6).

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 7 & 8

There has been a 17.7% (+21,917) increase in the total number of completed outpatient waits between December 2011 (123,645) and March 2012 (145,562), with an increase of 7.0% (9,550) compared to March 2011 (136,012) (Figure 10 & Table 7).

Figure 10: Completed outpatient waits including Independent Sector activity: Quarterly trends QE March 2011 – QE March 2012^P



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

Between the quarters ending March 2011 and March 2012, there have been large fluctuations in the total number of completed outpatient waits commissioned by the Health Service, with both in-house and Independent Sector activity falling in each of the quarters between March 2011 and September 2011 and then increasing in each of the subsequent quarters until March 2012.

However, whilst the in-house activity (124,578) this quarter is similar to the same quarter last year (125,901), there has been a large increase in independent sector activity (20,984 in the quarter ending March 2012 compared to 10,111 in the quarter ending March 2011). This increase in Independent Sector activity was the sole reason for increase in the total number of completed waits between

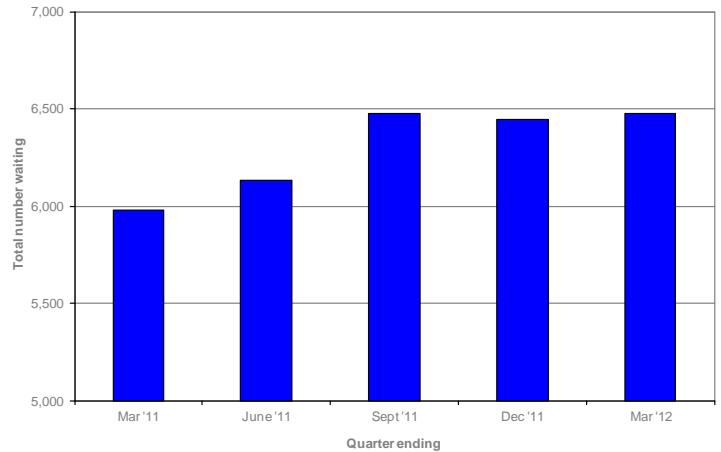
this quarter (145,562) and the same quarter last year (136,012).

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

During the March 2012 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 6,476 patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment at the end of March 2012. This was 33 (+0.5%) more than at the end of December 2011 (6,443) and 497 (+8.3%) more than at the end of the same quarter last year (5,979) (Figure 11 & Table 8)

Figure 11: Total number of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment: Quarterly trends 31st March 2011 – 31st March 2012



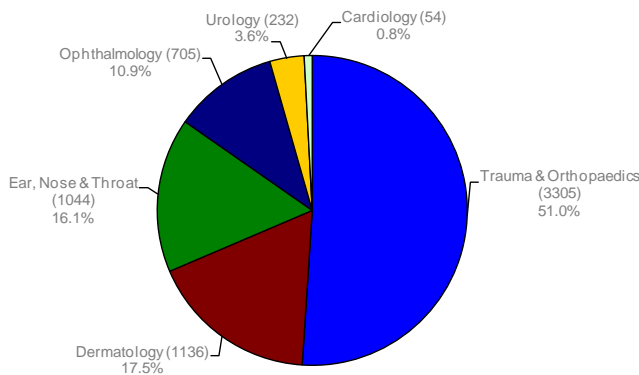
Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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

The majority (51.0%, 3,305) of those waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment were waiting for an appointment within the Trauma & Orthopaedics specialty, followed by Dermatology (17.5%, 1,136), ENT (16.1%, 1,044), Ophthalmology (10.9%, 705), and Urology (3.6%, 232). Only a small proportion of those waiting were within the Cardiology specialty (0.8%, 54) (Figure 12 & Table 9a).

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-11

Figure 12: Total number of ICATS patients waiting by specialty at 31st March 2012

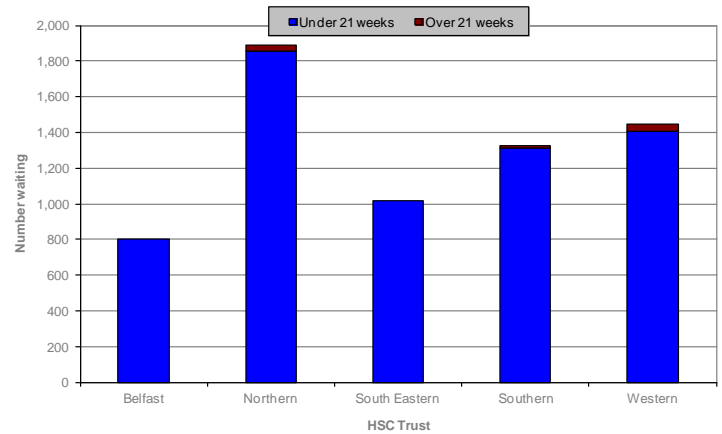


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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

Almost three tenths of those waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment were waiting in the Northern (29.1%, 1,886) HSC Trust. A further 22.3% (1,446), 20.4% (1,323) and 15.8% (1,020) were waiting in the Western, Southern and South Eastern HSC Trusts respectively, with 12.4% (801) waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust (Figure 13 & Table 10a).

Figure 13: Total number of ICATS patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31st March 2012



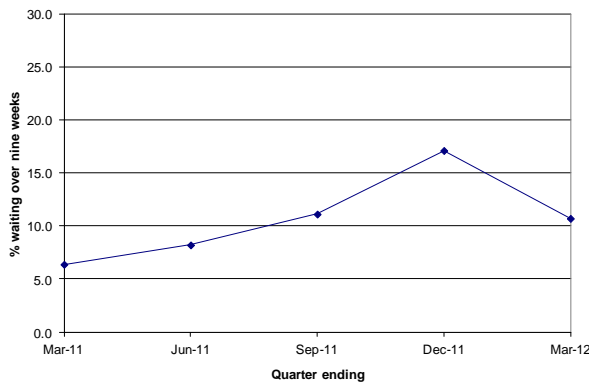
Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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

At the end of March 2012, 10.7% of patients were waiting longer than nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment (693 out of 6,476 patients), compared with 17.7% (1,141 out of 6,443 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of December 2011 and 6.4% (381 out of 5,979 total patients waiting) at the end of March 2011 (Figure 14 & Table 10a).

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-11

Figure 14: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks for a first Tier 2 ICATS appointment: Quarterly trends 31st March 2011 – 31st March 2012

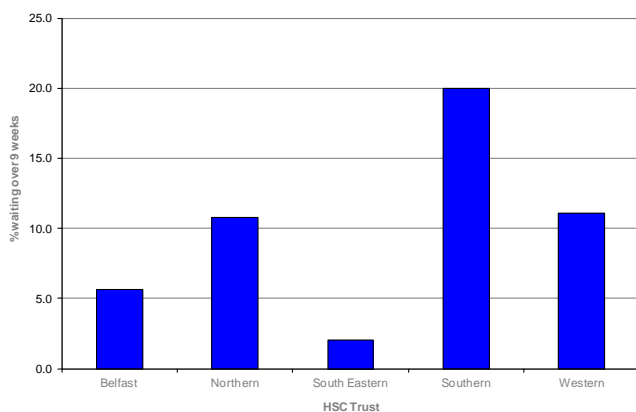


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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 20.0% at the Southern HSC Trust, 11.1% at the Western HSC Trust, 10.8% at the Northern HSC Trust, 5.6% at the Belfast HSC Trust and 2.0% 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 at 31st March 2012



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 March 2012 there were 76 patients waiting longer than 21 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, a decrease of 204 on the quarter ending 31st December 2011 (280) (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 (52.6%, 40) were waiting in the ENT specialty, with a further 39.5% (30) waiting in the Dermatology specialty. Only 6.6% and 1.3% were waiters in the Urology (5) and Ophthalmology (1) specialties. There were no patients waiting longer than 21 weeks in the Cardiology or Trauma and Orthopaedics specialties (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 2.7% (39) at the Western HSC Trust, 1.5% (28) at the Northern HSC Trust, and 0.7% (9) at the Southern HSC Trust. There were no patients waiting longer than 21 weeks in the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust.

⁶ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-12

Consultant-led Outpatient Services

Table 1 Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 31st March 2012¹

	Quarter Ending March 2012	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total Waiting	103,007	-21,093	-3,199

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 speciality – 31st March 2012²

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	
ENT	6,605	2,362	1,155	1,396	472	2	11,992
General Surgery	7,814	1,846	678	710	56	1	11,105
Ophthalmology	4,793	1,749	1,292	1,431	107	3	9,375
T & O Surgery	5,635	1,958	1,437	316	1	2	9,349
Dermatology	3,886	1,077	930	1,485	417	104	7,899
Gynaecology	5,138	1,548	689	309	20	5	7,709
General Medicine	2,735	788	519	604	233	651	5,530
Other: -	20,332	6,464	4,220	5,203	1,790	2,039	40,048
Oral Surgery	1,397	553	572	1,017	293	895	4,727
Paediatrics	2,791	878	464	366	29	63	4,591
Neurology	1,729	645	547	748	327	251	4,247
Cardiology	2,415	707	284	285	162	226	4,079
Urology	1,736	604	435	601	215	61	3,652
Rheumatology	1,572	582	417	505	204	238	3,518
Gastroenterology	1,360	469	244	134	0	0	2,207
Plastic Surgery	695	268	296	353	217	250	2,079
Restorative Dentistry	583	277	325	495	193	0	1,873
Pain Management	1,056	309	124	172	73	5	1,739
Thoracic Medicine	964	300	109	163	29	9	1,574
Geriatric Medicine	555	127	53	65	15	1	816
Endocrinology	384	122	70	50	0	0	626
Other	3,095	623	280	249	33	40	4,320
All Specialties	56,938	17,792	10,920	11,454	3,096	2,807	103,007

Source: Departmental Return CH3

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 5

Table 2b Percentage of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st March 2012²

Specialty	% Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
ENT	55.1%	19.7%	9.6%	11.6%	3.9%	0.0%
General Surgery	70.4%	16.6%	6.1%	6.4%	0.5%	0.0%
Ophthalmology	51.1%	18.7%	13.8%	15.3%	1.1%	0.0%
T & O Surgery	60.3%	20.9%	15.4%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Dermatology	49.2%	13.6%	11.8%	18.8%	5.3%	1.3%
Gynaecology	66.6%	20.1%	8.9%	4.0%	0.3%	0.1%
General Medicine	49.5%	14.2%	9.4%	10.9%	4.2%	11.8%
Other: -	50.8%	16.1%	10.5%	13.0%	4.5%	5.1%
Oral Surgery	29.6%	11.7%	12.1%	21.5%	6.2%	18.9%
Paediatrics	60.8%	19.1%	10.1%	8.0%	0.6%	1.4%
Neurology	40.7%	15.2%	12.9%	17.6%	7.7%	5.9%
Cardiology	59.2%	17.3%	7.0%	7.0%	4.0%	5.5%
Urology	47.5%	16.5%	11.9%	16.5%	5.9%	1.7%
Rheumatology	44.7%	16.5%	11.9%	14.4%	5.8%	6.8%
Gastroenterology	61.6%	21.3%	11.1%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Plastic Surgery	33.4%	12.9%	14.2%	17.0%	10.4%	12.0%
Restorative Dentistry	31.1%	14.8%	17.4%	26.4%	10.3%	0.0%
Pain Management	60.7%	17.8%	7.1%	9.9%	4.2%	0.3%
Thoracic Medicine	61.2%	19.1%	6.9%	10.4%	1.8%	0.6%
Geriatric Medicine	68.0%	15.6%	6.5%	8.0%	1.8%	0.1%
Endocrinology	61.3%	19.5%	11.2%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	71.6%	14.4%	6.5%	5.8%	0.8%	0.9%
All Specialties	55.3%	17.3%	10.6%	11.1%	3.0%	2.7%

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 March 2012²

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	21,114	6,742	4,426	4,644	1,574	1,284	39,784
Northern	7,736	2,678	2,052	2,414	740	867	16,487
South Eastern	9,603	2,818	1,508	1,557	534	570	16,590
Southern	9,609	2,942	1,082	1,499	245	86	15,463
Western	8,876	2,612	1,852	1,340	3	0	14,683
Total	56,938	17,792	10,920	11,454	3,096	2,807	103,007

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 March 2012²

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
Belfast	53.1%	16.9%	11.1%	11.7%	4.0%	3.2%
Northern	46.9%	16.2%	12.4%	14.6%	4.5%	5.3%
South Eastern	57.9%	17.0%	9.1%	9.4%	3.2%	3.4%
Southern	62.1%	19.0%	7.0%	9.7%	1.6%	0.6%
Western	60.5%	17.8%	12.6%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	55.3%	17.3%	10.6%	11.1%	3.0%	2.7%

Source: Departmental Return CH3

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 5

Table 4 Patients waiting over 21 weeks for a first outpatient appointment – 31st March 2012³

	Quarter Ending March 2012	Change compared with end of previous quarter
Total waiting over 21 weeks	5,903	-18,817

Source: Departmental Return CH3

³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 6

Table 5 Completed outpatient waits: QE June 2008 – QE March 2012⁴

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	117,626	869	118,495
J - S 2010	111,241	337	111,578
O - D 2010	119,025	7,063	126,088
J - M 2011	125,901	10,111	136,012
A - M 2010/11	473,793	18,380	492,173
A - J 2011 ^{RP}	116,696	3,291	119,987
J - S 2011 ^{RP}	111,878	617	112,495
O - D 2011 ^{RP}	119,807	3,838	123,645
J - M 2011 ^P	124,578	20,984	145,562
A - M 2011/12^P	472,959	28,730	501,689

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 March 2012⁴

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	47,072	7,382	54,454
Northern	15,993	4,643	20,636
South Eastern	20,773	3,129	23,902
Southern	20,338	2,886	23,224
Western	20,402	2,944	23,346
Total Treated	124,578	20,984	145,562

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 March 2011 - QE March 2012⁴

Provider Trust	Total Number of Completed Outpatient Waits Commissioned by Health Service				
	QE March 2011	QE June 2011 ^{RP}	QE September 2011 ^{RP}	QE December 2011 ^{RP}	QE March 2012 ^P
Belfast	51,918	45,953	40,639	48,079	54,454
Northern	16,106	14,854	14,088	14,939	20,636
South Eastern	23,479	19,583	19,398	20,132	23,902
Southern	22,371	19,534	18,123	19,036	23,224
Western	22,138	20,063	20,247	21,459	23,346
Total	136,012	119,987	112,495	123,645	145,562

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 March 2012⁵

	Quarter Ending March 2012	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total Waiting	6,476	+33	+497

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 March 2012⁵

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	72	45	53	57	5	0	232
Trauma & Orthopaedics	2,835	447	18	5	0	0	3,305
Ear, Nose & Throat	713	191	49	51	11	29	1,044
Ophthalmology	525	121	40	18	1	0	705
Cardiology	39	15	0	0	0	0	54
Dermatology	574	206	161	165	23	7	1,136
All Specialties	4,758	1,025	321	296	40	36	6,476

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 March 2012⁵

Specialty	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
Urology	31.0%	19.4%	22.8%	24.6%	2.2%	0.0%
Trauma & Orthopaedics	85.8%	13.5%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Ear, Nose & Throat	68.3%	18.3%	4.7%	4.9%	1.1%	2.8%
Ophthalmology	74.5%	17.2%	5.7%	2.6%	0.1%	0.0%
Cardiology	72.2%	27.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Dermatology	50.5%	18.1%	14.2%	14.5%	2.0%	0.6%
All Specialties	73.5%	15.8%	5.0%	4.6%	0.6%	0.6%

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 March 2012⁵

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	623	133	33	12	0	0	801
Northern	1,441	241	93	83	21	7	1,886
South Eastern	865	135	16	4	0	0	1,020
Southern	728	331	120	135	9	0	1,323
Western	1,101	185	59	62	10	29	1,446
Total	4,758	1,025	321	296	40	36	6,476

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 March 2012⁵

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26
Belfast	77.8%	16.6%	4.1%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Northern	76.4%	12.8%	4.9%	4.4%	1.1%	0.4%
South Eastern	84.8%	13.2%	1.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Southern	55.0%	25.0%	9.1%	10.2%	0.7%	0.0%
Western	76.1%	12.8%	4.1%	4.3%	0.7%	2.0%
Total	73.5%	15.8%	5.0%	4.6%	0.6%	0.6%

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 March 2012⁶

	Quarter Ending March 2012	Change compared with end of previous quarter
Total waiting over 21 weeks	76	-204

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, ENT, 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 30th June 2012 will be released on Thursday 30th August 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 9 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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