



NORTHERN IRELAND WAITING TIME STATISTICS: OUTPATIENT WAITING TIMES QUARTER ENDING MARCH 2014

This publication presents information on waiting times for a first outpatient assessment in Northern Ireland at 31st March 2014. 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 2013/14 Ministerial waiting time target which states that from April 2013 at least 70% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 18 weeks, increasing to 80% by March 2014 and no one waiting longer than 15 weeks. 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 March 2014 stood at 127,095, 10.8% (12,397) more than at the end of December 2013 and 27.4% (27,321) more than at the end of March 2013 (Figure 1 & Table 1).
- Of all patients waiting at the end of March 2014, 31.3% (39,768) were waiting more than nine weeks, this is compared with 33.4% waiting more than nine weeks at the end of December 2013 and 19.8% at the end of March 2013 (Figure 5 & Table 3b).
- The number of patients waiting more than 15 weeks at the end of March 2014 was 19,173, 15.1% of the total number waiting. This is compared with 14,942 (13.0%) waiting more than 15 weeks at the end of December 2013, and 5,573 (5.6%) at the end of March 2013 (Table 4).
- When attendances at HSC Trusts and Health Service commissioned Independent Sector activity are combined, it is estimated that approximately 129,888 outpatients attended a first outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland during the quarter January to March 2014 (Figure 11 & Table 5).
- There were 8,533 patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment at the end of March 2014. This was 47 (0.6%) more than at the end of December 2013 and 1,786 (26.5%) more than at the end of March 2013 (Figure 12 & Table 8).
- A total of 15.4% (1,318) of patients were waiting longer than nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, with 433 of these patients waiting more than 15 weeks (Figures 14 & 16 & 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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Target audience	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), Chief Executives of the HSC Board and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, academics, and Health & Social Care stakeholders.
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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 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 part of a quarterly data series presenting information on waiting times for outpatient services at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland.

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, Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR), IS1 Part 1, 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.

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.england.nhs.uk/statistics/rtt-waiting-times/>

Scotland

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/>

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/health/nhsperformance/waiting-times/?lang=en>

A National Statistics Publication

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;

- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Further information on the Code of Practice for National Statistics is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/>.

A list of those who received 24-hour pre-release access to this publication is available at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/waiting_times_main/stats-waiting-times.htm

Contact Information

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

Data contained in this release are published primarily to provide an indication of HSC Trust 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.

Consultant-led Outpatient Services

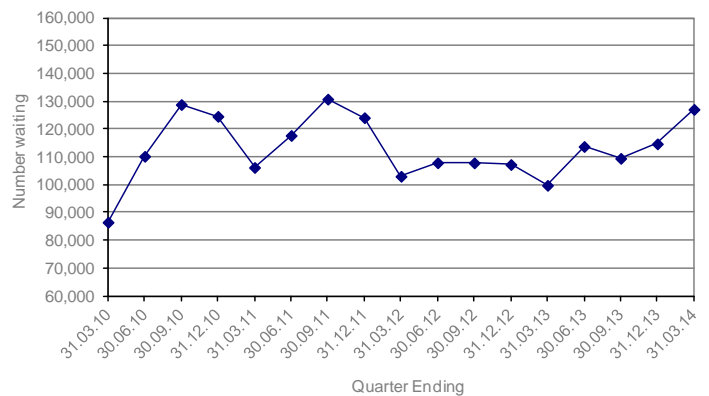
Data contained in this publication relates to the waiting times for a first outpatient assessment in services within HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland at 31st March 2014. An outpatient appointment is to enable a patient to see a consultant, a member of their team or locum for such a member, in respect of one referral.

Total patients waiting¹

The number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment at the end of March 2014 stood at 127,095, which is 12,397 (10.8%) more than at the end of December 2013 (114,698) and 27,321 (27.4%) more than at the end of March 2013 (99,774) (Figure 1 & Table 1).

There was a substantial increase in the numbers waiting for a first outpatient appointment between March 2010 (86,501) through to September 2010 (128,835) and then a decrease through to the end of March 2011 (with 106,206 patients waiting). The same pattern of a rise in waiting time figures in the first half of the financial year, and a decrease in the second half was observed in 2011/12. The number of patients waiting remained relatively stable during 2012/13, but there has been a slight upward trend during 2013/14.

Figure 1: Total number of patients waiting: Quarterly trends 31st March 2010 – 31st March 2014

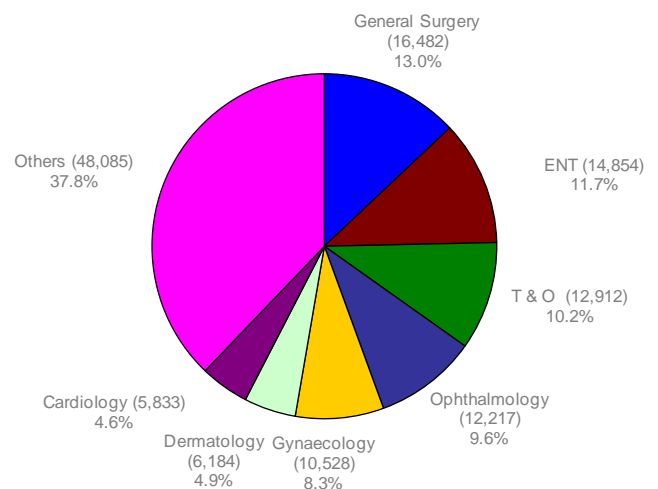


Source: Departmental Return CH3

Total Patients Waiting by Specialty¹

Over three fifths of the 127,095 (62.2%, 79,010) patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment were within seven specialties: General Surgery; Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT); Trauma & Orthopaedics (T & O); Ophthalmology; Gynaecology; Dermatology, and Cardiology (Figure 2 & Table 2a).

Figure 2: Total number of patients waiting by specialty at 31st March 2014



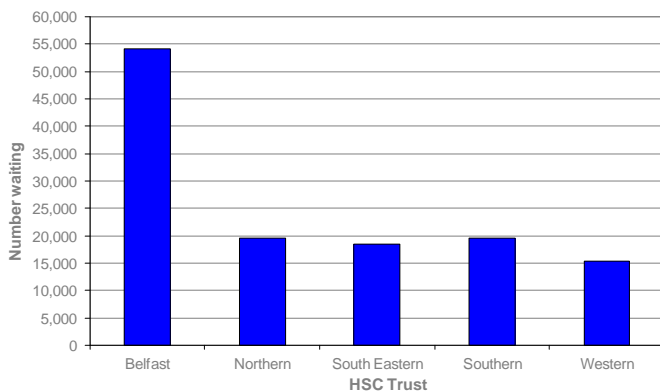
Source: Departmental Return CH3

¹ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–3

Total Patients Waiting by HSC Trust²

Just over two fifths (42.7%, 54,207) of patients waiting for a first appointment were waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust. A further 15.4% (19,535) of those waiting were waiting in the Southern HSC Trust, 15.4% (19,517) in the Northern HSC Trust, 14.5% (18,403) in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 12.1% (15,433) in the Western HSC Trust (Figure 3 & Table 3a).

Figure 3: Total number of patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31st March 2014



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. For example, in the case of Plastic Surgery, services are largely provided at a single regional centre for Northern Ireland in the South Eastern HSC Trust. Similarly, the specialty Cardiac Surgery is only provided at the Belfast HSC Trust and so all patients across Northern Ireland requiring services in this specialty will attend the Belfast HSC Trust, regardless of their Trust of residence. 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 2013/14 waiting time target³

The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, states that from April 2013, at least 70% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 18 weeks, **increasing to 80% by March 2014 and no one waiting longer than 15 weeks.**

Figure 4: HSC Trust performance against the 2013/14 waiting time target for a consultant-led first appointment

HSC Trust	Target Achieved	
	At least 80% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks	No patient waiting longer than 15 weeks
Belfast	No	No
Northern	No	No
South Eastern	Yes	No
Southern	No	No
Western	No	No
Northern Ireland	No	No

Source: Departmental Return CH3

At the end of March 2014, Northern Ireland, as a whole, did not meet the first element of the target that at least 80% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a consultant led first appointment. Only the South Eastern HSC Trust had at least 80% of patients waiting under nine weeks. The Western HSC Trust only narrowly missed this element of the target, having 79.4% of patients waiting less than nine weeks at the 31st March 2014 (Figures 4 & 6 & Table 3b).

Northern Ireland, overall, did not meet the second element of the target that there should be no patient waiting longer than 15 weeks. All Trusts had patients waiting longer than 15 weeks at the end of March 2014 (Figures 4 & 8 & Table 3a).

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-4

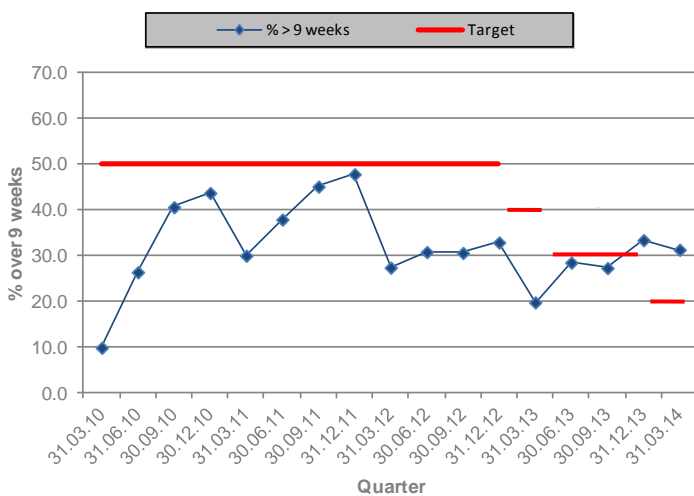
³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-6

(Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks³

Achievement of the nine week target requires that less than 20% of patients should be waiting over nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment. At the end of March 2014, 31.3% of patients waited more than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment (39,768 out of a total of 127,095), compared with 33.4% (38,261 out of 114,698 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of December 2013 and 19.8% (19,764 out of 99,774 total patients waiting) at the end of March 2013 (Figure 5 & Table 3b).

Figure 5: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st March 2010 – 31st March 2014



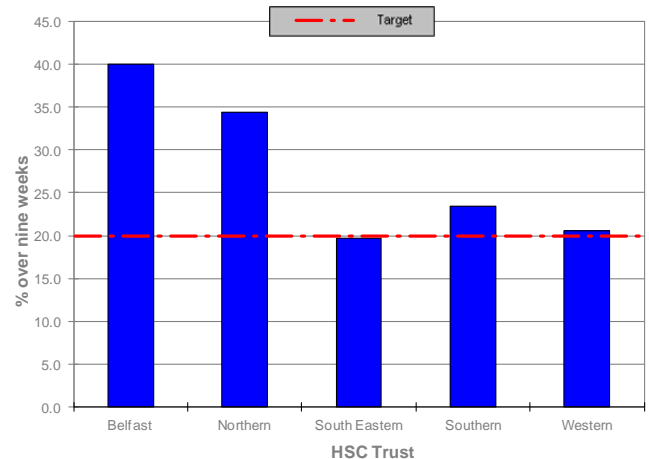
Source: Departmental Return CH3

Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks by HSC Trust³

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 nine weeks was 40.0% at the Belfast HSC Trust, 34.4% at the Northern HSC Trust, 23.4% at the Southern HSC Trust, 20.6% at the Western HSC Trust and 19.7% at the South Eastern HSC Trust (Figure 6 & Table 3b).

Figure 6: Proportion of patients waiting over 9 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st March 2014



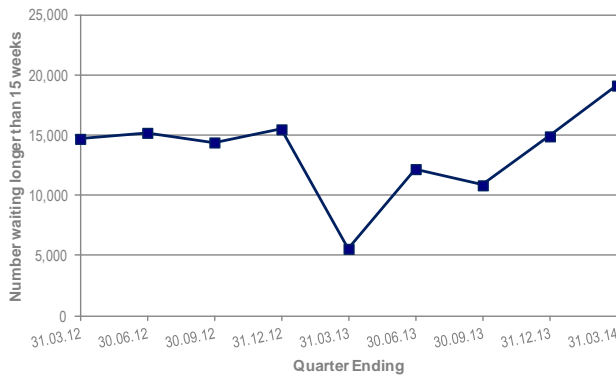
Source: Departmental Return CH3

Patients waiting longer than 2013/14 maximum waiting time target³

At the end of March 2014, there were 19,173 patients waiting longer than 15 weeks, compared to 14,942 waiting at the end of December 2013, and 5,573 waiting at the end of March 2013 (Figure 7 & Table 4).

³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-6 (Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

Figure 7: Number of patients waiting longer than 15 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st March 2012 – 31st March 2014

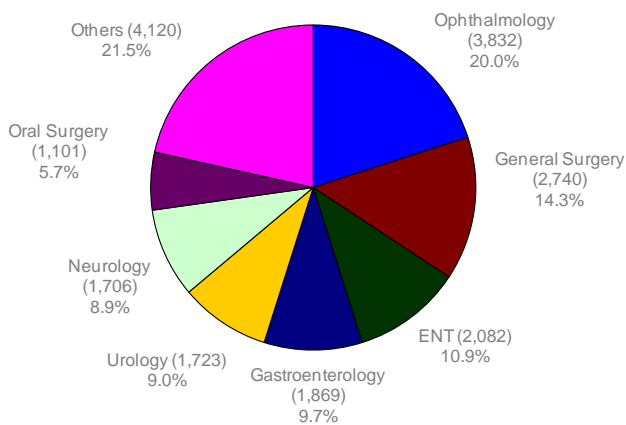


Source: Departmental Return CH3

Patients waiting longer than 2013/14 maximum waiting time target by Specialty³

Nearly four fifths (78.5%, 15,053) of the 19,173 patients waiting more than 15 weeks were within seven specialties: Ophthalmology, General Surgery, ENT, Gastroenterology, Urology, Neurology and Oral Surgery (Figure 8 & Table 2a).

Figure 8: Patients waiting over 15 weeks by specialty at 31st March 2014

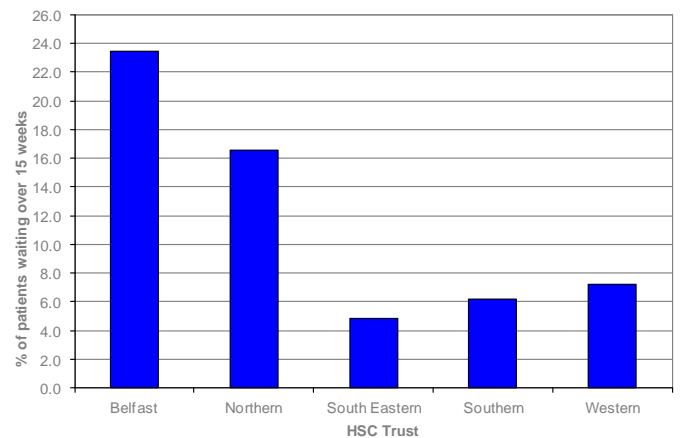


Source: Departmental Return CH3

Patients waiting longer than 2013/14 maximum waiting time target by HSC Trust³

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 15 weeks was 23.5% (12,730) at the Belfast HSC Trust, 16.6% (3,240) at the Northern HSC Trust, 7.2% (1,115) at the Western HSC Trust, 6.2% (1,205) at the Southern HSC Trust and 4.8% (883) at the South Eastern HSC Trust (Figure 9 & Table 3b).

Figure 9: Proportion of patients waiting over 15 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st March 2014



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 10 and Table 5).

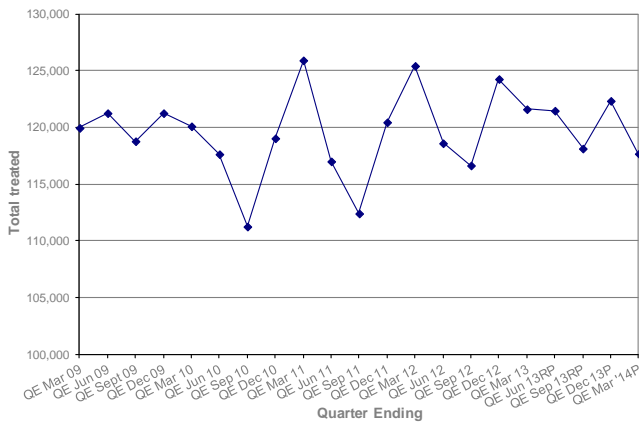
During the quarter ending 31st March 2014, 117,714 patients attended a first outpatient appointment in a Health Service hospital,

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-6 (Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 7-8

compared with 122,326 in the quarter ending 31st December 2013 (a decrease of 3.8%) and 121,591 in the quarter ending 31st March 2013 (a decrease of 3.2%) (Table 5).

Figure 10: Total number of completed waits in Health Service Hospitals: Quarterly trends QE March 2009 – QE March 2014^P



Source: Departmental Return QOAR.
^PData are currently provisional
^RData have been revised

Completed Waits within Independent Sector⁴

During the quarter ending March 2014, a number of patients attended a first 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 5).

During the quarter ending March 2014, 12,174 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, within the Independent Sector. This is an increase on the quarter ending December 2013 (9,730) but a decrease on the same quarter of the previous year (19,260) (Table 5).

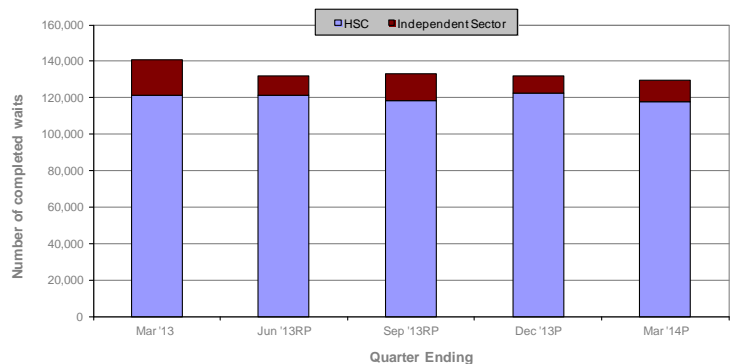
Completed Waits Including Independent Sector Activity⁴

When the total number of completed outpatient waits commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector, during the quarter ending March 2014 (12,174) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals during the same period (117,714), it is estimated that approximately 129,888 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland for an assessment commissioned by the Health Service (Tables 5 & 6)

Over a third 36.8% (47,740) of all completed waits for the quarter ending 31st March 2014 occurred in the Belfast HSC Trust, with 17.6% (22,874), 16.6% (21,557), 15.9% (20,636) and 13.2% (17,081) occurring in the South Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern HSC Trusts respectively (Table 6).

There has been a 1.6% (2,168) decrease in the total number of completed outpatient waits between December 2013 (132,056) and March 2014 (129,888), with a decrease of 7.8% (10,963) compared to March 2013 (140,851) (Figure 11 & Table 7).

Figure 11: Completed outpatient waits including Independent Sector activity: Quarterly trends QE March 2013 – QE March 2014



Source: Departmental Return QOAR and IS1 Part 1
^PData are currently provisional
^RData have been revised

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 7-8

The overall decrease in the total number of completed waits between the quarters ending December 2013 and March 2014 (from 132,056 to 129,888) was due solely to the decrease within in-house activity (from 122,326 to 117,714), as activity commissioned by the Health Service, within independent sector hospitals increased (from 9,730 in the quarter ending December 2013 to 12,174 in the quarter ending March 2014).

The decrease in the total number of completed waits between the quarters ending March 2013 to March 2014 (from 140,851 to 129,888) was due to decreases within both in-house activity (from 121,591 to 117,714) and independent sector activity (from 19,260 in the quarter ending March 2013 to 12,174 in the quarter ending March 2014) (Table 5).

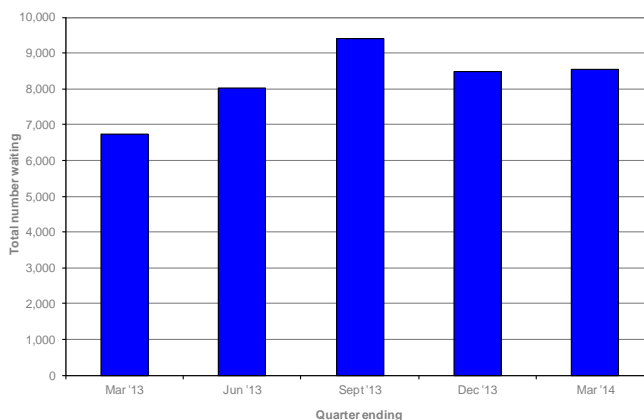
Waiting Times for a First Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service (ICATS) Tier 2 Appointment⁵

During the quarter ending March 2014, 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 8,533 patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment at the end of March 2014. This was 47 (0.6%) more than at the end of December 2013 (8,486) and 1,786 (26.5%) more than at the end of the same quarter last year (6,747) (Figure 12 & Table 8)

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-11

Figure 12: Total number of patients waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment: Quarterly trends 31st March 2013 – 31st March 2014

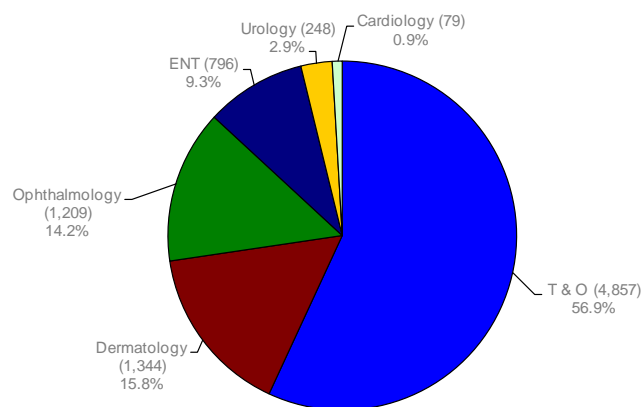


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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

The majority (56.9%, 4,857) of those waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment were waiting for an appointment within the T & O specialty, followed by Dermatology (15.8%, 1,344), Ophthalmology (14.2%, 1,209) and ENT (9.3%, 796). Only a small proportion of those waiting were within the Urology (2.9%, 248) and Cardiology specialties (0.9%, 79) (Figure 13 & Table 9a).

Figure 13: Total number of ICATS patients waiting by specialty at 31st March 2014

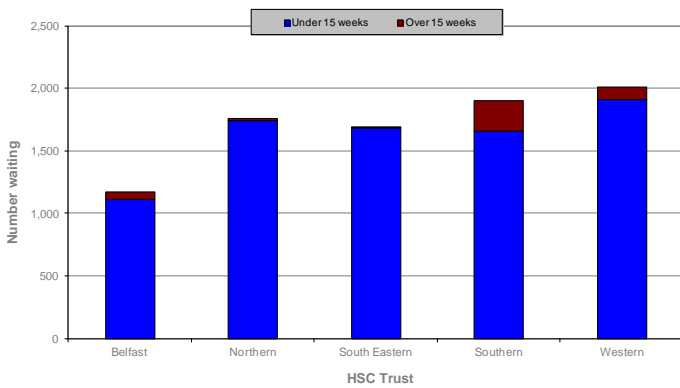


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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

The highest number of those waiting for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment were waiting in the Western HSC Trust (23.6%, 2,011). A further 22.3% (1,903), 20.6% (1,761), 19.7% (1,684) and 13.8% (1,174) were waiting in the Southern, Northern, South Eastern and Belfast HSC Trusts respectively (Figure 14 & Table 10a).

Figure 14: Total number of ICATS patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31st March 2014



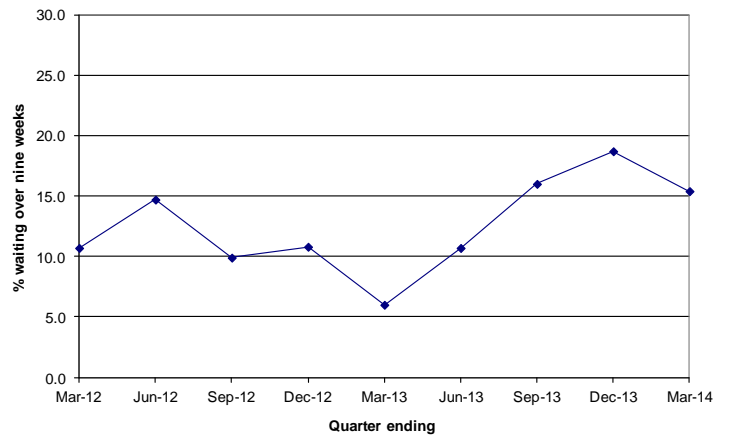
Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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

At the end of March 2014, 15.4% of patients were waiting longer than nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment (1,318 out of 8,533 patients), compared with 18.7% (1,585 out of 8,486 total patients waiting) waiting more than nine weeks at the end of December 2013 and 6.0% (404 out of 6,747 total patients waiting) at the end of March 2013 (Figure 15 & Table 10a).

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 -11

Figure 15: Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment: Quarterly trends 31st March 2012 – 31st March 2014

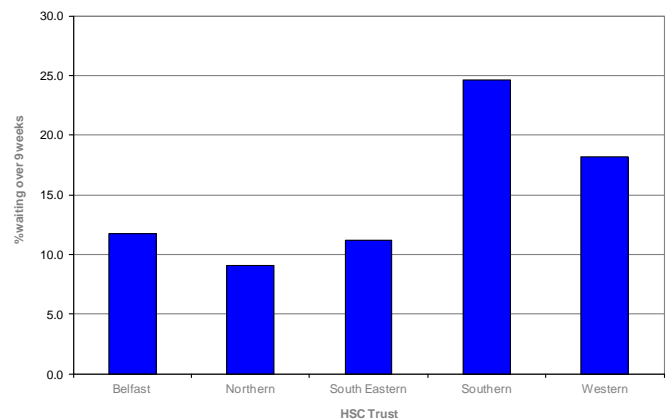


Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

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

The proportion of patients waiting longer than nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment was 24.6% at the Southern HSC Trust, 18.2% at the Western HSC Trust, 11.8% at the Belfast HSC Trust, 11.2% at the South Eastern HSC Trust and 9.0% at the Northern HSC Trust (Figure 16 & Table 10b).

Figure 16: Proportion of patients waiting over nine weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment by HSC Trust at 31st March 2014



Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

Patients waiting longer than 15 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 Appointment⁵

At the end of March 2014, there were 433 patients waiting longer than 15 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, compared to 377 at the end of December 2013, and 87 at the end of March 2013 (Table 11).

Patients waiting longer than 15 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 Appointment by Specialty⁵

Of those patients waiting over 15 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment, over a third (35.1%, 152) were waiting in the Dermatology specialty. A further 26.3% (114) were waiting in the Urology specialty, with 17.3% (75), 11.1% (48) and 10.2% (44) waiting in the ENT, Ophthalmology and T & O specialties respectively. There were no patients waiting longer than 15 weeks in the Cardiology specialty (Table 9a).

Proportion of patients waiting longer than 15 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 Appointment by HSC Trust⁵

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 15 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment was 13.1% (249) at the Southern HSC Trust, 5.3% (62) at the Belfast HSC Trust, 4.9% (99) at the Western HSC Trust, 1.2% (21) at the Northern HSC Trust and 0.1% (2) at the South Eastern HSC Trust (Table 10b).

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9-11

Consultant-led Outpatient Services

Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 31st March 2014¹

	Quarter Ending March 2014	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total Waiting	127,095	+12,397	+27,321

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 March 2014³

Specialty	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting						Total Number of Patients Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18	
General Surgery	8,639	2,728	1,582	793	753	1,987	16,482
ENT	7,230	2,835	1,920	787	877	1,205	14,854
Trauma & Orthopaedics	6,009	3,193	1,891	1,125	574	120	12,912
Ophthalmology	4,803	1,687	1,159	736	866	2,966	12,217
Gynaecology	6,351	2,210	1,196	438	152	181	10,528
Dermatology	4,426	1,028	499	179	50	2	6,184
Cardiology	3,393	1,015	667	237	95	426	5,833
Other: -	23,824	7,956	4,976	2,410	2,345	6,574	48,085
Urology	2,107	747	603	390	484	1,239	5,570
Neurology	1,806	764	624	349	391	1,315	5,249
Gastroenterology	1,847	682	522	300	339	1,530	5,220
Paediatrics	3,365	1,141	317	128	54	87	5,092
General Medicine	2,539	737	410	172	199	186	4,243
Oral Surgery	1,581	616	540	260	339	762	4,098
Rheumatology	1,847	717	537	170	170	467	3,908
Thoracic Medicine	1,340	453	315	159	108	520	2,895
Pain Management	1,185	486	284	120	68	56	2,199
Restorative Dentistry	691	240	215	84	10	17	1,257
Plastic Surgery	752	146	28	18	15	5	964
Geriatric Medicine	644	112	46	33	25	98	958
Endocrinology	555	200	57	23	19	5	859
Other	3,565	915	478	204	124	287	5,573
All Specialties	64,675	22,652	13,890	6,705	5,712	13,461	127,095

Source: Departmental Return CH3

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 – 6

(Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

Table 2b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st March 2014³

Specialty	% Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18
General Surgery	52.4%	16.6%	9.6%	4.8%	4.6%	12.1%
ENT	48.7%	19.1%	12.9%	5.3%	5.9%	8.1%
Trauma & Orthopaedics	46.5%	24.7%	14.6%	8.7%	4.4%	0.9%
Ophthalmology	39.3%	13.8%	9.5%	6.0%	7.1%	24.3%
Gynaecology	60.3%	21.0%	11.4%	4.2%	1.4%	1.7%
Dermatology	71.6%	16.6%	8.1%	2.9%	0.8%	<0.05%
Cardiology	58.2%	17.4%	11.4%	4.1%	1.6%	7.3%
Other: -	49.5%	16.5%	10.3%	5.0%	4.9%	13.7%
Urology	37.8%	13.4%	10.8%	7.0%	8.7%	22.2%
Neurology	34.4%	14.6%	11.9%	6.6%	7.4%	25.1%
Gastroenterology	35.4%	13.1%	10.0%	5.7%	6.5%	29.3%
Paediatrics	66.1%	22.4%	6.2%	2.5%	1.1%	1.7%
General Medicine	59.8%	17.4%	9.7%	4.1%	4.7%	4.4%
Oral Surgery	38.6%	15.0%	13.2%	6.3%	8.3%	18.6%
Rheumatology	47.3%	18.3%	13.7%	4.4%	4.4%	11.9%
Thoracic Medicine	46.3%	15.6%	10.9%	5.5%	3.7%	18.0%
Pain Management	53.9%	22.1%	12.9%	5.5%	3.1%	2.5%
Restorative Dentistry	55.0%	19.1%	17.1%	6.7%	0.8%	1.4%
Plastic Surgery	78.0%	15.1%	2.9%	1.9%	1.6%	0.5%
Geriatric Medicine	67.2%	11.7%	4.8%	3.4%	2.6%	10.2%
Endocrinology	64.6%	23.3%	6.6%	2.7%	2.2%	0.6%
Other	64.0%	16.4%	8.6%	3.7%	2.2%	5.1%
All Specialties	50.9%	17.8%	10.9%	5.3%	4.5%	10.6%

Source: Departmental Return CH3

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 6

(Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

Table 3a: Number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st March 2014³

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting						Total Number of Patients Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18	
Belfast	23,411	9,108	5,755	3,203	3,015	9,715	54,207
Northern	9,634	3,175	2,212	1,256	1,271	1,969	19,517
South Eastern	11,237	3,536	2,068	679	376	507	18,403
Southern	10,979	3,987	2,396	968	557	648	19,535
Western	9,414	2,846	1,459	599	493	622	15,433
Total	64,675	22,652	13,890	6,705	5,712	13,461	127,095

Source: Departmental Return CH3

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 6

(Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

Table 3b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st March 2014³

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment by Weeks Waiting					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>13-15	>15-18	>18
Belfast	43.2%	16.8%	10.6%	5.9%	5.6%	17.9%
Northern	49.4%	16.3%	11.3%	6.4%	6.5%	10.1%
South Eastern	61.1%	19.2%	11.2%	3.7%	2.0%	2.8%
Southern	56.2%	20.4%	12.3%	5.0%	2.9%	3.3%
Western	61.0%	18.4%	9.5%	3.9%	3.2%	4.0%
Total	50.9%	17.8%	10.9%	5.3%	4.5%	10.6%

Source: Departmental Return CH3

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 6

(Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

Table 4: Patients waiting over 15 weeks for a first outpatient appointment – 31st March 2014³

	Quarter Ending March 2014	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total waiting over 15 weeks	19,173	+4,231	+13,600

Source: Departmental Return CH3

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1 - 6

(Specifically Explanatory Note 4 for information on the centralisation of Oral Surgery services and how these waiting times are reported.)

Table 5: Completed outpatient waits: QE June 2008 – QE March 2014⁴

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	116,990	3,291	120,281
J - S 2011	112,394	617	113,011
O - D 2011	120,440	3,838	124,278
J - M 2012	125,411	20,984	146,395
A - M 2011/12	475,235	28,730	503,965
A - J 2012	118,588	9,976	128,564
J - S 2012	116,629	12,463	129,092
O - D 2012	124,251	9,094	133,345
J - M 2013	121,591	19,260	140,851
A - M 2012/13	481,059	50,793	531,852
A - J 2013 ^{RP}	121,461	10,469	131,930
J - S 2013 ^{RP}	118,120	15,041	133,161
O - D 2013 ^P	122,326	9,730	132,056
J - M 2014 ^P	117,714	12,174	129,888
A - M 2013/14^P	479,621	47,414	527,035

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 2014⁴

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	42,275	5,465	47,740
Northern	14,846	2,235	17,081
South Eastern	20,414	2,460	22,874
Southern	20,031	605	20,636
Western	20,148	1,409	21,557
Total Treated	117,714	12,174	129,888

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 2013 - QE March 2014⁴

Provider Trust	Total Number of Completed Outpatient Waits Commissioned by Health Service				
	QE March 2013	QE June 2013 ^{RP}	QE September 2013 ^{RP}	QE December 2013 ^P	QE March 2014 ^P
Belfast	54,911	47,277	48,195	46,974	47,740
Northern	16,575	18,498	15,929	17,581	17,081
South Eastern	25,064	22,793	24,583	23,763	22,874
Southern	22,478	20,801	22,680	21,883	20,636
Western	21,823	22,561	21,774	21,855	21,557
Total	140,851	131,930	133,161	132,056	129,888

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 2014⁵

	Quarter Ending March 2014	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total Waiting	8,533	+47	+1,786

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 2014⁵

Specialty	Patients Waiting for an Appointment						Total Number
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18	
Urology	61	30	12	31	44	70	248
Trauma & Orthopaedics	3,421	1,001	338	53	18	26	4,857
Ear, Nose & Throat	489	129	86	17	32	43	796
Ophthalmology	875	208	57	21	24	24	1,209
Cardiology	58	10	8	3	0	0	79
Dermatology	686	247	161	98	119	33	1,344
All Specialties	5,590	1,625	662	223	237	196	8,533

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 2014⁵

Specialty	Patients Waiting for an Appointment					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18
Urology	24.6%	12.1%	4.8%	12.5%	17.7%	28.2%
Trauma & Orthopaedics	70.4%	20.6%	7.0%	1.1%	0.4%	0.5%
Ear, Nose & Throat	61.4%	16.2%	10.8%	2.1%	4.0%	5.4%
Ophthalmology	72.4%	17.2%	4.7%	1.7%	2.0%	2.0%
Cardiology	73.4%	12.7%	10.1%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Dermatology	51.0%	18.4%	12.0%	7.3%	8.9%	2.5%
All Specialties	65.5%	19.0%	7.8%	2.6%	2.8%	2.3%

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 2014⁵

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment						Total Number
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18	
Belfast	866	170	54	22	25	37	1,174
Northern	1,346	256	95	43	12	9	1,761
South Eastern	1,093	403	177	9	1	1	1,684
Southern	1,059	376	127	92	151	98	1,903
Western	1,226	420	209	57	48	51	2,011
Total	5,590	1,625	662	223	237	196	8,533

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 2014⁵

Provider Trust	Patients Waiting for an Appointment					
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18
Belfast	73.8%	14.5%	4.6%	1.9%	2.1%	3.2%
Northern	76.4%	14.5%	5.4%	2.4%	0.7%	0.5%
South Eastern	64.9%	23.9%	10.5%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%
Southern	55.6%	19.8%	6.7%	4.8%	7.9%	5.1%
Western	61.0%	20.9%	10.4%	2.8%	2.4%	2.5%
Total	65.5%	19.0%	7.8%	2.6%	2.8%	2.3%

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 – 11

Table 11: Patients waiting over 15 weeks for a first ICATS Tier 2 appointment – 31st March 2014⁵

	Quarter Ending March 2014	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter - previous year
Total waiting over 15 weeks	433	+56	+346

Source: ICATS Waiting Times Dataset

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 9 – 11

Appendix 1: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the Departmental Returns CH3, IS1 Part 1, 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. In preparation for the centralisation of Oral Surgery services undertaken by consultants contracted to the South Eastern HSC Trust from 1st April 2014, records for patients waiting for this service in both the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts were transferred to South Eastern HSC Trust during February 2014. However, to ensure the waiting times information reported was consistent with previous quarters in 2013/14, the waiting times for these patients have been reported against the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts. As a consequence, care should be taken when using this Oral Surgery data.
5. For Tables 2 - 4, and Figures 4 - 8 outpatient waiting timeband 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.
6. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as set out in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction states that from April 2013, at least 70% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 18 weeks for a first outpatient appointment, increasing to 80% by March 2014 and no one waiting longer than 15 weeks.
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. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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
15. Figures relating to the quarter ending 30th June 2014 will be released on Thursday 28th August 2014.

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

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

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

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. 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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