

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
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Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending September 2018



Department of
Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Máinnstríe O Poustie
www.health-ni.gov.uk

Reader Information

Purpose: This statistical release presents information on waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland and reports on the performance of the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts against the 2018/19 Ministerial waiting time target, which states that:

“By March 2019, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment; with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.”

This statistical release details information on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting, for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in HSC Trusts at 30th September 2018. It also includes activity for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during the quarter ending September 2018. Data are presented by HSC Trust, specialty and time band. Information on Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS) waiting times are available in the accompanying CSV file.

Statistical Quality: The ‘*Outpatient Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*’ booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-september-2018>

Internet: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times>

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Target audience: Department of Health (DoH), Chief Executives of the HSC Board and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, Health & Social Care stakeholders, academics, the media and the general public.

Price: Free

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By March 2019, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks.

Total number of patients waiting at 30th September 2018

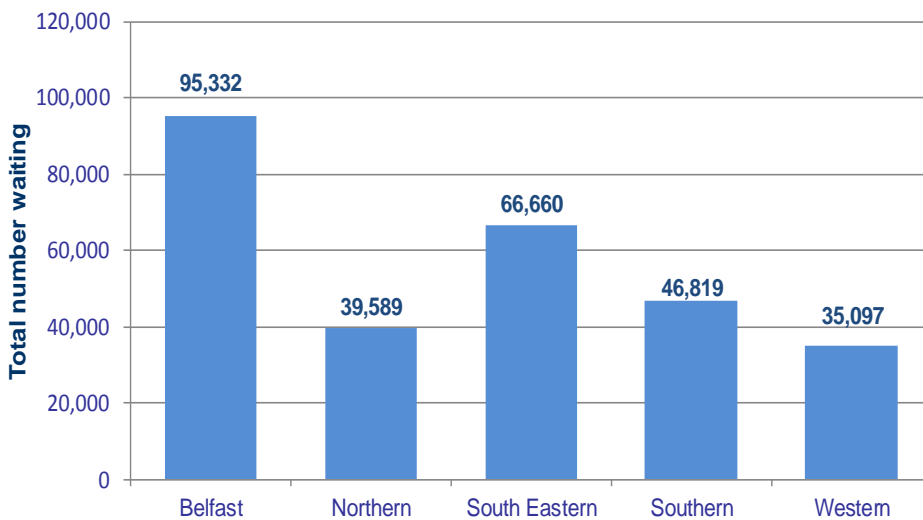
There were
283,497 patients
waiting for a first outpatient
appointment in Northern
Ireland

An **increase of 2.8%** on
the previous quarter

An **increase of 4.0%** on
the same quarter last year

Source: CH3 Return

At 30th September 2018, a total of 283,497 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 2.8% (7,613) more than at 30th June 2018 (275,884) and 4.0% (10,841) more than at 30th September 2017 (272,656) (Table 1).



Source: CH3 Return

A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust, and instead are provided at a single regional centre for Northern Ireland. As patients are reported against the HSC Trust responsible for the service to which they have been referred, users should be cautious in how they use these data (see explanatory note 9).

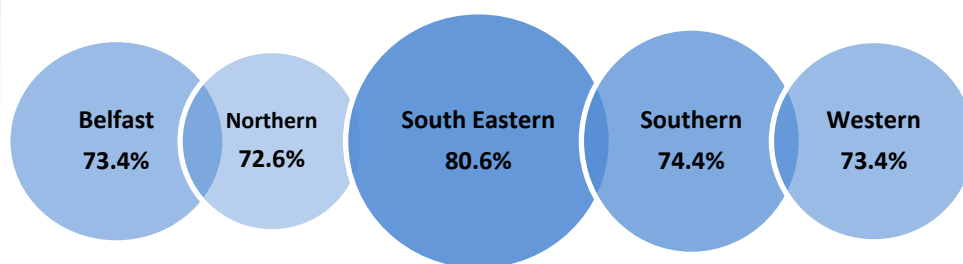
Over one third (33.6%) of those waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 23.5% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 16.5% in the Southern HSC Trust, 14.0% in the Northern HSC Trust and 12.4% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Three fifths (60.7%, 172,085) of the 283,497 patients were waiting for a first outpatient appointment in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (35,989); Trauma and Orthopaedics (T&O) Surgery (29,995); General Surgery (28,708); Ophthalmology (23,864); Dermatology (19,320); Neurology (18,441) and Gynaecology (15,768) (Table 3a).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th September 2018

This element was **not achieved** by Northern Ireland as a whole

75.1%
of patients
were waiting longer
than 9 weeks



Percentage waiting over 9 weeks

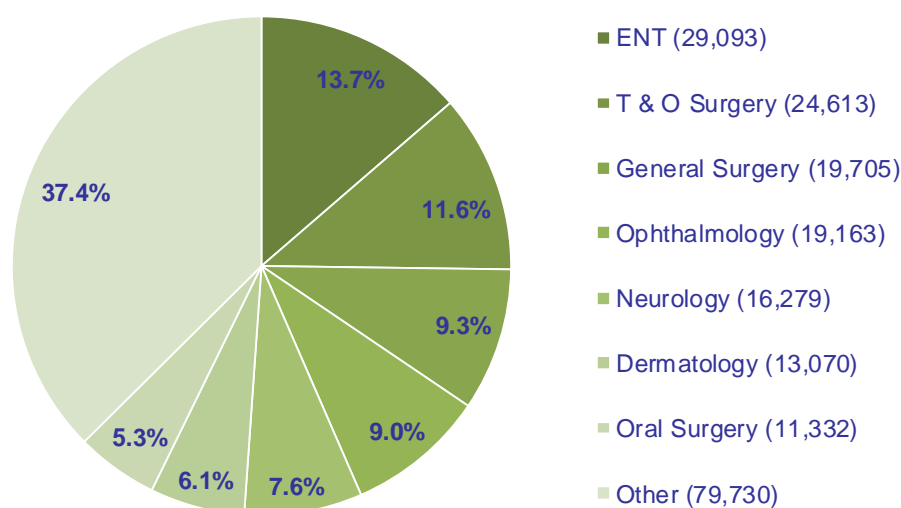
Source: CH3 Return

Achievement of the 9 week target requires that less than 50% of patients should be waiting over 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment.

Over three quarters (75.1%, 212,985) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30th September 2018, compared with 73.2% (202,081) at 30th June 2018 and 74.6% (203,478) at 30th September 2017 (Table 1).

At 30th September 2018, the 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2a). Data users should be aware that not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks by speciality



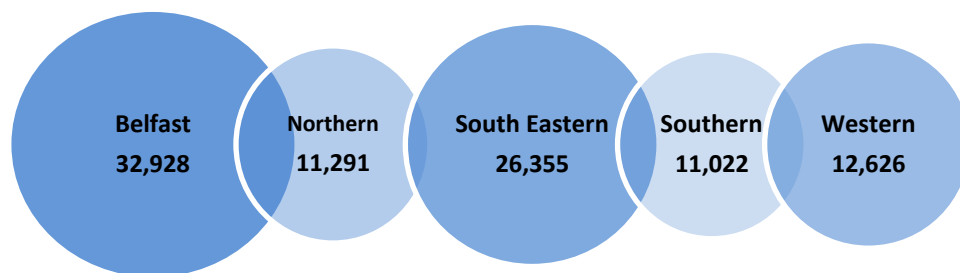
Just under two-thirds (62.6%, 133,255) of the 212,985 patients waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30th September 2018 were in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; General Surgery; Ophthalmology; Neurology; Dermatology and Oral Surgery (Table 3a).

Source: CH3 Return

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks at 30th September 2018

This element was **not achieved** by Northern Ireland as a whole

94,222
patients
were waiting longer
than 52 weeks



Number waiting over 52 weeks

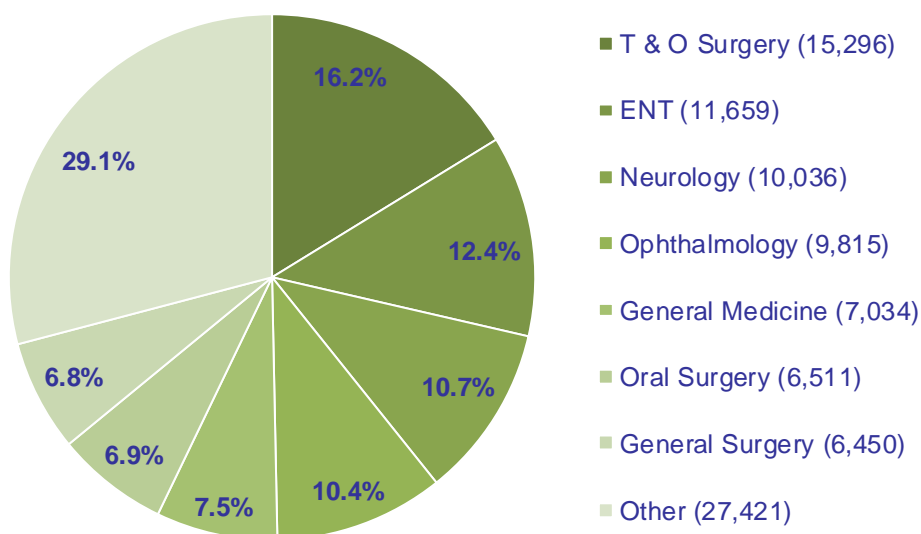
Source: CH3 Return

At 30th September 2018, 33.2% (94,222) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 32.1% (88,598) at 30th June 2018, and 26.9% (73,380) at 30th September 2017 (Table 1).

At 30th September 2018, the 52 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2a). Data users should be aware that some outpatient services are not provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Almost two fifths (39.5%, 26,355) of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks at 30th September 2018, 36.0% (12,626) in the Western HSC Trust, 34.5% (32,928) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 28.5% (11,291) in the Northern HSC Trust and 23.5% (11,022) in the Southern HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks by specialty



Source: CH3 Return

A total of 70.9% (66,801) of the 94,222 patients waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment were in one of the following specialties: Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Neurology; Ophthalmology; General Medicine; Oral Surgery and General Surgery (Table 3a).

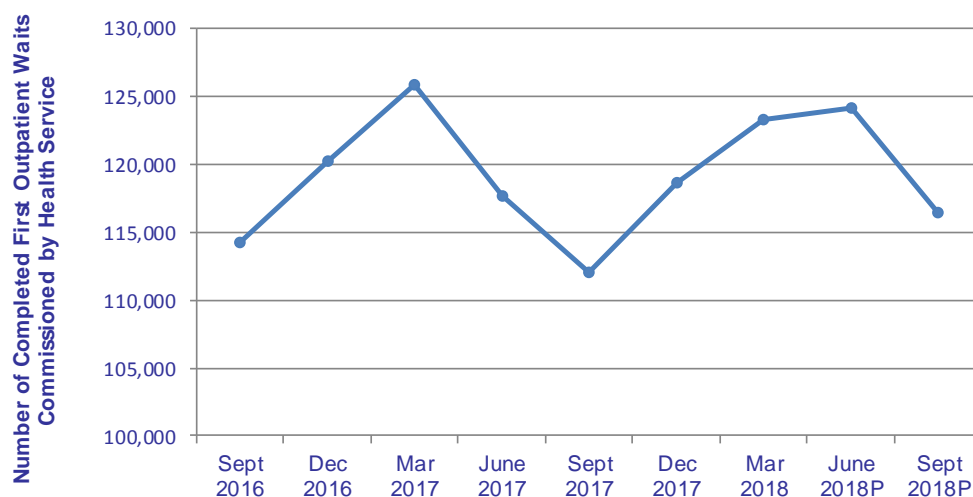
Completed waits for a first outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during quarter ending September 2018



Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

There were 114,806 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending September 2018. This was 6.9% (8,569) less than during the quarter ending June 2018 (123,375), and 3.5% (3,871) more than during the quarter ending September 2017 (110,935) (Table 4).

During the quarter ending September 2018, 1,663 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment within the Independent Sector. This was more than double the number who attended during the quarter ending June 2018 (728), and 50.0% (554) more than the number who attended in the same quarter last year (1,109) (Table 4).



Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns
P Data is provisional

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector, during the quarter ending September 2018 (1,663) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals during the

same period (114,806), provisional figures indicate that (116,469) outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by the Health Service (Table 4). This is a decrease of 6.2% (7,634) on the number seen during the quarter ending June 2018 (124,103), and 3.9% (4,425) more than during the quarter ending September 2017 (112,044).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 30th September 2018¹

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (30 th Sept 2018)	Previous Quarter (30 th June 2018)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 th Sept 2017)
Total Patients Waiting	283,497	275,884	272,656
Number waiting over 9 weeks	212,985	202,081	203,478
<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	75.1%	73.2%	74.6%
Number waiting over 52 weeks	94,222	88,598	73,380

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 2a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 30th September 2018¹

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Belfast	18,989	6,393	4,250	4,326	3,776	24,670	32,928	95,332
Northern	8,287	2,579	1,977	2,078	1,852	11,525	11,291	39,589
South Eastern	9,776	3,173	2,557	2,646	2,328	19,825	26,355	66,660
Southern	9,113	2,869	2,348	2,332	2,201	16,934	11,022	46,819
Western	7,169	2,164	1,691	1,670	1,383	8,394	12,626	35,097
Total	53,334	17,178	12,823	13,052	11,540	81,348	94,222	283,497

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 2b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 30th September 2018¹

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting						
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52
Belfast	19.9%	6.7%	4.5%	4.5%	4.0%	25.9%	34.5%
Northern	20.9%	6.5%	5.0%	5.2%	4.7%	29.1%	28.5%
South Eastern	14.7%	4.8%	3.8%	4.0%	3.5%	29.7%	39.5%
Southern	19.5%	6.1%	5.0%	5.0%	4.7%	36.2%	23.5%
Western	20.4%	6.2%	4.8%	4.8%	3.9%	23.9%	36.0%
Total	18.8%	6.1%	4.5%	4.6%	4.1%	28.7%	33.2%

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 3a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 30th September 2018¹

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
ENT	5,204	1,692	1,397	1,624	1,591	12,822	11,659	35,989
T & O Surgery	4,090	1,292	912	888	817	6,700	15,296	29,995
General Surgery	6,882	2,121	1,642	1,591	1,303	8,719	6,450	28,708
Ophthalmology	3,416	1,285	950	1,002	913	6,483	9,815	23,864
Dermatology	4,889	1,361	1,111	1,043	925	5,501	4,490	19,320
Neurology	1,529	633	492	479	440	4,832	10,036	18,441
Gynaecology	4,725	1,402	871	807	715	3,560	3,688	15,768
General Medicine	1,967	574	469	417	365	2,973	7,034	13,799
Oral Surgery	1,054	372	327	438	322	3,734	6,511	12,758
Rheumatology	1,506	551	483	521	460	3,719	5,162	12,402
Paediatrics	2,904	1,112	892	995	888	3,663	1,938	12,392
Cardiology	3,492	1,112	646	618	481	2,436	319	9,104
Thoracic Medicine	1,459	505	418	356	328	2,896	2,653	8,615
Gastroenterology	1,561	544	376	389	300	2,601	2,753	8,524
Urology	1,826	524	332	331	330	2,260	2,327	7,930
Pain Management	966	423	391	463	448	3,284	1,571	7,546
Plastic Surgery	626	215	177	202	193	1,760	1,864	5,037
Geriatric Medicine	1,001	285	187	149	130	478	257	2,487
Restorative Dentistry	339	109	104	107	94	865	214	1,832
Other	3,898	1,066	646	632	497	2,062	185	8,986
All Specialties	53,334	17,178	12,823	13,052	11,540	81,348	94,222	283,497

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 3b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 30th September 2018¹

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting						
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52
T & O Surgery	14.5%	4.7%	3.9%	4.5%	4.4%	35.6%	32.4%
ENT	13.6%	4.3%	3.0%	3.0%	2.7%	22.3%	51.0%
General Surgery	24.0%	7.4%	5.7%	5.5%	4.5%	30.4%	22.5%
Ophthalmology	14.3%	5.4%	4.0%	4.2%	3.8%	27.2%	41.1%
Gynaecology	25.3%	7.0%	5.8%	5.4%	4.8%	28.5%	23.2%
Neurology	8.3%	3.4%	2.7%	2.6%	2.4%	26.2%	54.4%
General Medicine	30.0%	8.9%	5.5%	5.1%	4.5%	22.6%	23.4%
Dermatology	14.3%	4.2%	3.4%	3.0%	2.6%	21.5%	51.0%
Urology	8.3%	2.9%	2.6%	3.4%	2.5%	29.3%	51.0%
Paediatrics	12.1%	4.4%	3.9%	4.2%	3.7%	30.0%	41.6%
Rheumatology	23.4%	9.0%	7.2%	8.0%	7.2%	29.6%	15.6%
Gastroenterology	38.4%	12.2%	7.1%	6.8%	5.3%	26.8%	3.5%
Oral Surgery	16.9%	5.9%	4.9%	4.1%	3.8%	33.6%	30.8%
Cardiology	18.3%	6.4%	4.4%	4.6%	3.5%	30.5%	32.3%
Pain Management	23.0%	6.6%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	28.5%	29.3%
Thoracic Medicine	12.8%	5.6%	5.2%	6.1%	5.9%	43.5%	20.8%
Plastic Surgery	12.4%	4.3%	3.5%	4.0%	3.8%	34.9%	37.0%
Geriatric Medicine	40.2%	11.5%	7.5%	6.0%	5.2%	19.2%	10.3%
Restorative Dentistry	18.5%	5.9%	5.7%	5.8%	5.1%	47.2%	11.7%
Other	43.4%	11.9%	7.2%	7.0%	5.5%	22.9%	2.1%
All Specialties	18.8%	6.1%	4.5%	4.6%	4.1%	28.7%	33.2%

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 4: Number of completed waits for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service: QE September 2016 - QE September 2018²

Quarter Ending	Number of Completed First Outpatient Waits		
	Within Health Service Hospitals	Independent Sector*	Total Commissioned by Health Service
QE Sept 2016	113,682	526	114,208
QE Dec 2016	119,587	673	120,260
QE Mar 2017	124,143	1,725	125,868
QE June 2017	117,101	555	117,656
QE Sept 2017	110,935	1,109	112,044
QE Dec 2017	117,820	880	118,700
QE Mar 2018	120,967	2,328	123,295
QE June 2018 ^P	123,375	728	124,103
QE Sept 2018 ^P	114,806	1,663	116,469

Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

^P Data are currently provisional

* Not National Statistics

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4 & 11–14

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the DoH CH3, QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns. These returns collect information from Health and Social Care Trusts on a quarterly basis.
2. The '*Outpatient Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*' booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from:
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-september-2018>.
3. All of the data contained in the tables are available on a quarterly basis and can be supplied by individual specialty or Provider HSC Trust if this level of detail is required. In addition, quarterly data relating to waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment have been published in spreadsheet format (CSV), split by HSC Trust, Specialty and Programme of Care, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times-september-2018>.
4. Information includes patients living outside Northern Ireland and privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
5. 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.
6. From 1st April 2014, Oral Surgery services undertaken by consultants contracted to the South Eastern HSC Trust were centralised, meaning that records for patients waiting for this service in both the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts are now held and managed in the South Eastern HSC Trust. A breakdown of the waiting times for these patients broken down by HSC Trust has been provided in the spreadsheet located at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times-september-2018>.

7. Each outpatient waiting time band 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 time band and a patient waiting 6 weeks and 1 day would be included in the >6-9 (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) time band. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as set out in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction states that by March 2019, 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.
8. Some people will be waiting on more than one waiting list or be on the waiting list for more than one outpatient appointment/admission/diagnostic test at the same time due to having more than one condition.
9. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as set out in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction states that by March 2019, 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.
10. A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust or at each of the five HSC Trusts, and instead are provided at a single regional centre for 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. In some cases a consultant from one HSC Trust may provide a 'visiting' service at another HSC Trust, and so the patient may not 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 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. 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.
11. 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).

12. The number of patients who received an outpatient assessment, commissioned by the Health Service, in the Independent Sector is collected on the IS1 Part 1 Return. 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.

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. Figures relating to outpatient waiting times for the quarter ending 31st December 2018 will be released on Thursday 28th February 2019.

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

Hospital Information Branch
Information & Analysis Directorate
Department of Health
Stormont Estate
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

✉ Email: statistics@health-ni.gov.uk

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