

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
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Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending June 2019



Department of
Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Máinnstríe O Poustie
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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 2020, 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 June 2019 (including patients waiting to be seen at a Regional Assessment and Surgical Centre (RASC)). It also includes activity for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during the quarter ending June 2019. 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/outpatient-waiting-times-supporting-documentation>

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.

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By March 2020, 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 June 2019 (excluding those waiting at the RASCs)

There were **299,436 patients** waiting for a first outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland



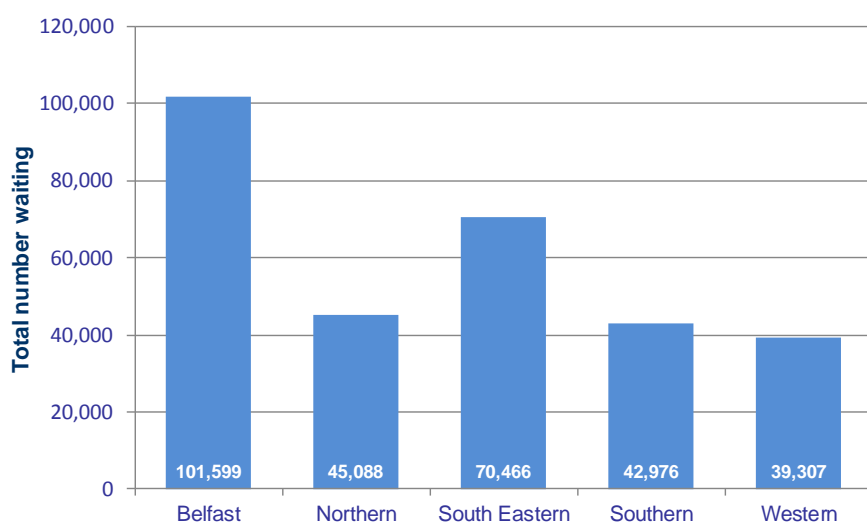
An **increase of 3.7%** on the previous quarter



An **increase of 8.5%** on the same quarter last year

Source: CH3 Return

At 30th June 2019, 299,436 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 3.7% (10,682) more than at 31st March 2019 (288,754) and 8.5% (23,552) more than at 30th June 2018 (275,884) (Table 1). This does not include patients waiting to be seen at a Regional Centre.



Just over one third (33.9%) of those waiting were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 23.5% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 15.1% in the Northern HSC Trust, 14.4% in the Southern HSC Trust and 13.1% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2b).

Source: CH3 Return

A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust, and instead are provided as centralised services 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).

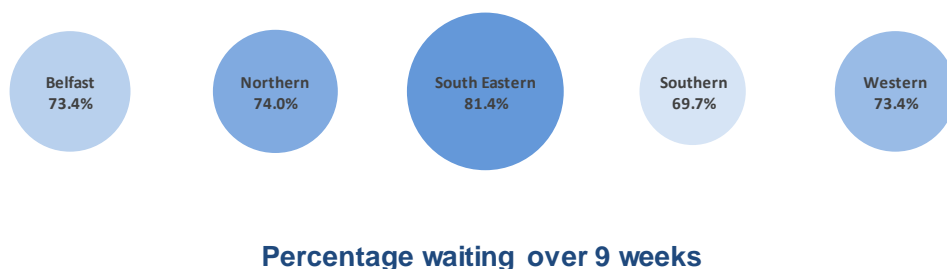
Of the 299,436 patients waiting, 60.8% (182,148) were waiting in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (37,770); General Surgery (28,721); Ophthalmology (28,429); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery (25,167); Dermatology (23,723); Neurology (19,767) and Gynaecology (18,571) (Table 3b).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th June 2019

By March 2020, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

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

74.9%
of patients
were waiting longer
than 9 weeks



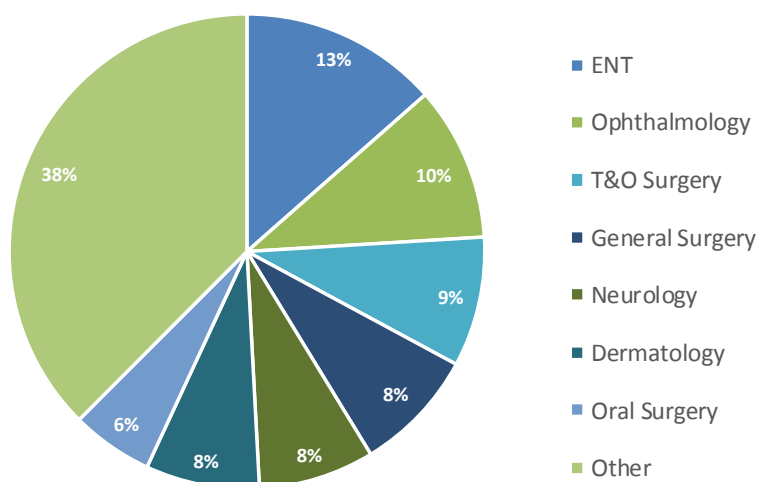
Source: CH3 Return

Almost three quarters (74.9%, 224,130) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30th June 2019, compared with 74.0% (213,708) at 31st March 2019 and 73.2% (202,081) at 30th June 2018 (Table 1).

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).

Over four fifths (81.4%, 57,372) of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 9 weeks; 74.0% (33,371) in the Northern HSC Trust, 73.4% (28,854) in the Western HSC Trust, 73.4% (74,568) in the Belfast HSC Trust and 69.7% (29,965) in the Southern HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks by specialty



More than three-fifths (62.5%, 140,025) of the 224,130 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Ophthalmology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; General Surgery; Neurology; Dermatology and Oral Surgery (Table 3a).

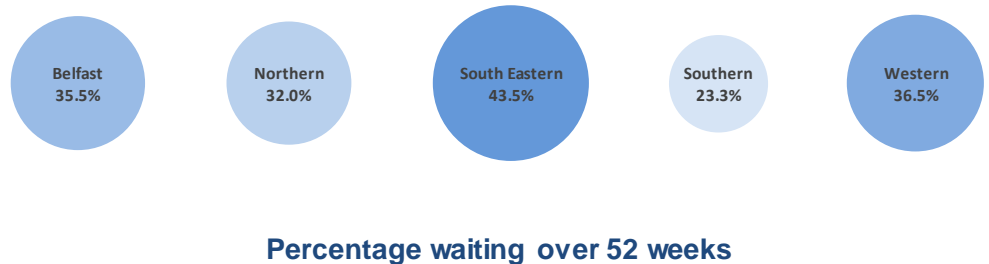
Source: CH3 Return

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks at 30th June 2019

By March 2020, no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

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

105,450
patients
were waiting longer
than 52 weeks



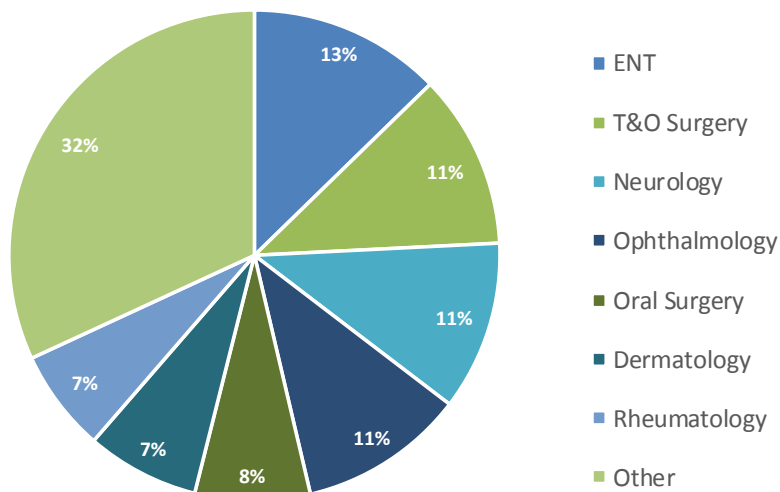
Source: CH3 Return

At 30th June 2019, 35.2% (105,450) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 33.9% (97,851) at 31st March 2019, and 32.1% (88,598) at 30th June 2018 (Table 1).

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 not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Over two fifths (43.5%, 30,621) of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks, 36.5% (14,343) in the Western HSC Trust, 35.5% (36,059) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 32.0% (14,406) in the Northern HSC Trust and 23.3% (10,021) in the Southern HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks by specialty



More than two thirds (68.1%, 71,824) of the 105,450 patients waiting more than 52 weeks were in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Neurology; Ophthalmology; Oral Surgery; Dermatology and Rheumatology (Table 3a).

Source: CH3 Return

Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Regional Assessment and Surgical Centre

In October 2016 the then Health Minister launched 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together,' a strategy which underpins the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Programme for Government ambition to support people to lead long, healthy and active lives.

As part of this strategy, the Elective Care Plan was published in February 2017 which stated that 'Regional Elective Care Assessment and Treatment Centres will be established to deliver large volumes of assessments and non-complex routine surgery across a broad range of specialties.' In December 2018, prototype 'Regional Assessment and Surgical Centres' (RASCs) became operational for the surgical treatment of Cataracts and Varicose Veins for outpatients and day cases. Patients waiting for either of these procedures can now be referred to a RASC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.

RASCs have been set up in the following locations:

RASC	Location(s) of Regional Centre
Cataracts	Mid Ulster Hospital (Northern HSC Trust) Downe Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust) South Tyrone Hospital (Southern HSC Trust)
Varicose Veins	Lagan Valley Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust) Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex (Western HSC Trust)

Due to these changes in operational service delivery and concomitant changes in how Outpatient waiting times are recorded, the following data and information about RASC Waiting Lists is provisional and subject to revision.

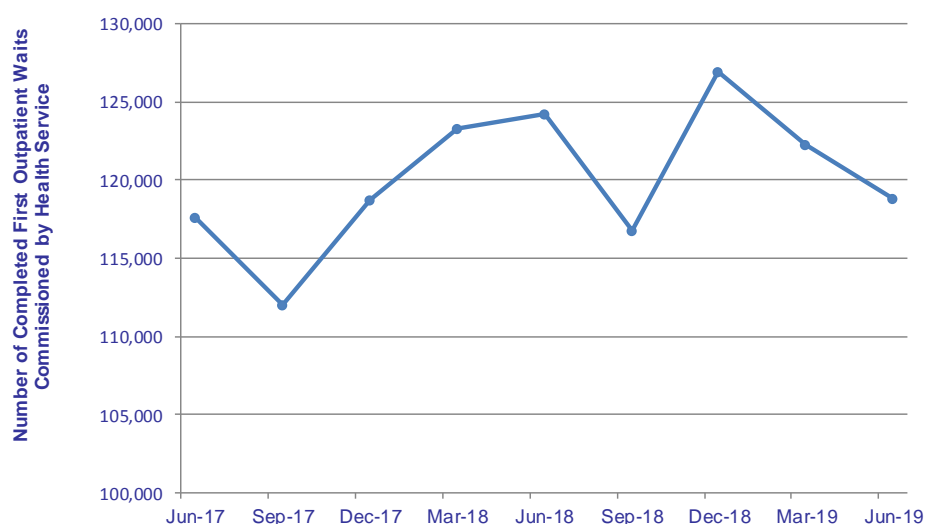
At 30th June 2019, 1,115 patients were waiting to be seen for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts RASC (Table 5a). There were no outpatients waiting for varicose veins treatment at a RASC.

Completed waits for a first outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during quarter ending June 2019



Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

There were 117,258 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland, 1.9% (2,244) less than during the quarter ending March 2019 (119,502), and 5.0% (6,139) less than during the quarter ending June 2018 (123,397). An additional 106 patients attended their appointment at a Regional Assessment and Surgical Centre (RASC) (Table 4).



Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

Note: Data for the latest 4 quarters are provisional

Within the Independent Sector, 1,453 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, 47.5% (1,313) less than the quarter ending March 2019 (2,766), and 77.2% (633) more than in the same quarter last year (820) (Table 4).

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service within the Independent Sector (1,453) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals (117,258), and those attending at a RASC (106), provisional figures indicate that (118,817) outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by the Health Service. This is a decrease of 2.9% (3,496) on the number seen during the quarter ending March 2019 (122,213), and 4.3% (5,400) less than during the quarter ending June 2018 (124,217) (Table 4).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 30th June 2019¹

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (30 th Jun 2019)	Previous Quarter (31 st Mar 2019)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 th Jun 2018)
Total Patients Waiting	299,436	288,754	275,884
Number waiting over 9 weeks	224,130	213,708	202,081
<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	74.9%	74.0%	73.2%
Number waiting over 52 weeks	105,450	97,851	88,598

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 June 2019¹

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	20,374	6,657	4,595	4,081	3,662	26,171	36,059	101,599
Northern	8,846	2,871	2,186	2,331	1,964	12,484	14,406	45,088
South Eastern	10,110	2,984	2,277	2,350	2,393	19,731	30,621	70,466
Southern	9,841	3,170	2,191	2,415	2,131	13,207	10,021	42,976
Western	8,136	2,317	1,739	1,656	1,672	9,444	14,343	39,307
Total	57,307	17,999	12,988	12,833	11,822	81,037	105,450	299,436

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 June 2019¹

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	20.1%	6.6%	4.5%	4.0%	3.6%	25.8%	35.5%
Northern	19.6%	6.4%	4.8%	5.2%	4.4%	27.7%	32.0%
South Eastern	14.3%	4.2%	3.2%	3.3%	3.4%	28.0%	43.5%
Southern	22.9%	7.4%	5.1%	5.6%	5.0%	30.7%	23.3%
Western	20.7%	5.9%	4.4%	4.2%	4.3%	24.0%	36.5%
Total	19.1%	6.0%	4.3%	4.3%	3.9%	27.1%	35.2%

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 June 2019¹

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	5,674	1,815	1,443	1,660	1,676	12,101	13,401	37,770
General Surgery	7,582	2,301	1,561	1,559	1,416	8,607	5,695	28,721
Ophthalmology	3,508	1,350	1,012	1,026	1,050	8,933	11,550	28,429
T&O Surgery	4,267	1,067	684	727	726	5,573	12,123	25,167
Dermatology	4,932	1,424	1,084	1,003	733	6,697	7,850	23,723
Neurology	1,489	623	452	429	513	4,476	11,785	19,767
Gynaecology	5,345	1,662	1,117	923	806	4,397	4,321	18,571
Oral Surgery	1,273	348	366	355	308	3,453	7,998	14,101
Rheumatology	1,647	568	426	499	472	3,170	7,117	13,899
Paediatrics	3,582	1,354	1,130	1,136	897	3,148	2,592	13,839
Gastroenterology	1,982	568	399	350	370	3,365	4,984	12,018
Cardiology	3,575	1,301	819	779	571	2,835	651	10,531
General Medicine	1,666	513	330	304	320	1,826	4,833	9,792
Thoracic Medicine	1,670	550	390	349	415	2,506	3,109	8,989
Urology	1,906	488	318	357	301	2,417	2,886	8,673
Pain Management	910	330	325	318	322	2,954	2,334	7,493
Plastic Surgery	799	235	201	206	178	1,467	1,792	4,878
Geriatric Medicine	958	294	170	163	125	480	116	2,306
Haematology (Clinical)	568	110	63	57	59	363	135	1,355
Other	3,974	1,098	698	633	564	2,269	178	9,414
All Specialties	57,307	17,999	12,988	12,833	11,822	81,037	105,450	299,436

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 June 2019¹

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
ENT	15.0%	4.8%	3.8%	4.4%	4.4%	32.0%	35.5%
General Surgery	26.4%	8.0%	5.4%	5.4%	4.9%	30.0%	19.8%
Ophthalmology	12.3%	4.7%	3.6%	3.6%	3.7%	31.4%	40.6%
T&O Surgery	17.0%	4.2%	2.7%	2.9%	2.9%	22.1%	48.2%
Dermatology	20.8%	6.0%	4.6%	4.2%	3.1%	28.2%	33.1%
Neurology	7.5%	3.2%	2.3%	2.2%	2.6%	22.6%	59.6%
Gynaecology	28.8%	8.9%	6.0%	5.0%	4.3%	23.7%	23.3%
Oral Surgery	9.0%	2.5%	2.6%	2.5%	2.2%	24.5%	56.7%
Rheumatology	11.8%	4.1%	3.1%	3.6%	3.4%	22.8%	51.2%
Paediatrics	25.9%	9.8%	8.2%	8.2%	6.5%	22.7%	18.7%
Gastroenterology	16.5%	4.7%	3.3%	2.9%	3.1%	28.0%	41.5%
Cardiology	33.9%	12.4%	7.8%	7.4%	5.4%	26.9%	6.2%
General Medicine	17.0%	5.2%	3.4%	3.1%	3.3%	18.6%	49.4%
Thoracic Medicine	18.6%	6.1%	4.3%	3.9%	4.6%	27.9%	34.6%
Urology	22.0%	5.6%	3.7%	4.1%	3.5%	27.9%	33.3%
Pain Management	12.1%	4.4%	4.3%	4.2%	4.3%	39.4%	31.1%
Plastic Surgery	16.4%	4.8%	4.1%	4.2%	3.6%	30.1%	36.7%
Geriatric Medicine	41.5%	12.7%	7.4%	7.1%	5.4%	20.8%	5.0%
Haematology (Clinical)	41.9%	8.1%	4.6%	4.2%	4.4%	26.8%	10.0%
Other	42.2%	11.7%	7.4%	6.7%	6.0%	24.1%	1.9%
All Specialties	19.1%	6.0%	4.3%	4.3%	3.9%	27.1%	35.2%

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 June 2017 - QE June 2019²

Quarter Ending	Number of Completed First Outpatient Waits			
	Within Health Service Hospitals	Within Regional Assessment and Surgical Centres*	Independent Sector*	Total Commissioned by Health Service
Jun-17	117,101	0	555	117,656
Sep-17	110,935	0	1,109	112,044
Dec-17	117,820	0	880	118,700
Mar-18	120,967	0	2,328	123,295
Jun-18	123,397	0	820	124,217
Sep-18 (p)	114,855	0	1,945	116,800
Dec-18 (p)	124,530	0	2,442	126,972
Mar-19 (p)	119,502	45	2,766	122,313
Jun-19 (p)	117,258	106	1,453	118,817

Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

(p) Data are currently provisional

* Not National Statistics

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

Table 5a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts Regional Assessment and Surgical Centre, by HSC Trust and weeks waiting, 30th June 2019

Trust	Weeks Waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Belfast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Eastern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western	282	148	91	126	137	331	0	1,115
Total	282	148	91	126	137	331	0	1,115

Source: CH3-R Return

* Not National Statistics

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the DoH CH3, CH3-R, QOAR, R-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/articles/outpatient-waiting-times>.
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/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-june-2019>.
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/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-june-2019>.

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 2020, 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. 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 as centralised services 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
10. In February 2019, prototype 'Regional Assessment and Surgical Centres' (RASCs) became operational for the surgical outpatient treatment of Cataracts. Patients waiting for this procedure can now be referred to a RASC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.
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) and the Regional Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (R-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 30th September 2019 will be released on Thursday 28th November 2019.
15. Data contained within this publication are National Statistics except for breast cancer referrals which are currently statistics in development.

Appendix 3: National Statistics

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The statistics last underwent a full assessment against the Code of Practice in 2011:

https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-assessmentreport153statisticsonhospitalwaitingtimesinnorthernirelan_tcm97-41176.pdf.

Designation was awarded in March 2013: [https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-letterofconfirmationasnationalstatisticsassessmentreport15_tcm97-42663.pdf)

[content/uploads/2015/12/images-letterofconfirmationasnationalstatisticsassessmentreport15_tcm97-42663.pdf](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-letterofconfirmationasnationalstatisticsassessmentreport15_tcm97-42663.pdf).

Since the assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

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

This Statistical bulletin and others published by Hospital Information Branch are available to download from the DoH Internet site at:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research>