

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
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Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending March 2017



Department of
Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Máinnstríe O Poustle
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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 2016/17 Ministerial waiting time target which states that:

“By March 2017, 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 31st March 2017. It also includes activity for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during the quarter ending March 2017. 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, definitions, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-march-2017>

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 2017, 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 31st March 2017

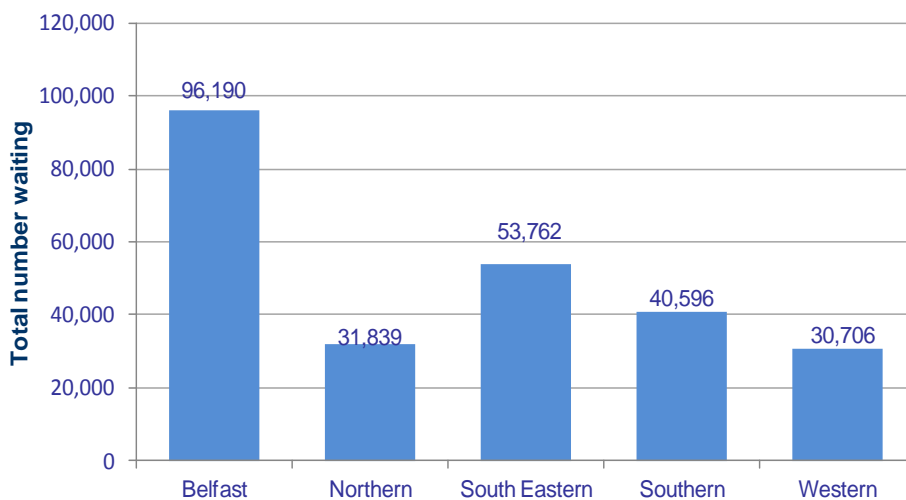
There were
253,093 patients
waiting for a first outpatient
appointment in Northern
Ireland

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

An **increase of 17.6%** on
the same quarter last year

Source: CH3 Return

At 31st March 2017, a total of 253,093 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 2.8% (6,895) more than at 31st December 2016 (246,198) and 17.6% (37,942) more than at 31st March 2016 (215,151) (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).

Almost two fifths (38.0%) of those waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 21.2% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 16.0% in the Southern HSC Trust, 12.6% in the Northern HSC Trust and 12.1% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2a).

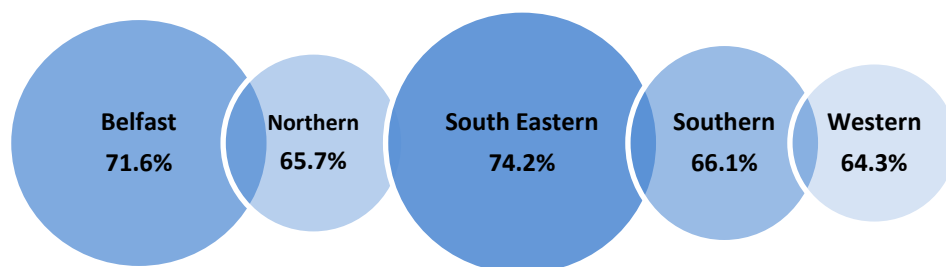
Nearly two thirds (62.9%, 159,199) of the 253,093 patients were waiting for a first outpatient appointment in one of the following specialties: Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery (32,196); Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (31,790); General Surgery (29,069); Ophthalmology (24,484); Gynaecology (15,099); Neurology (13,522) and General Medicine (13,039) (Table 3a).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 31st March 2017

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

69.6%

of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks



Percentage waiting over 9 weeks

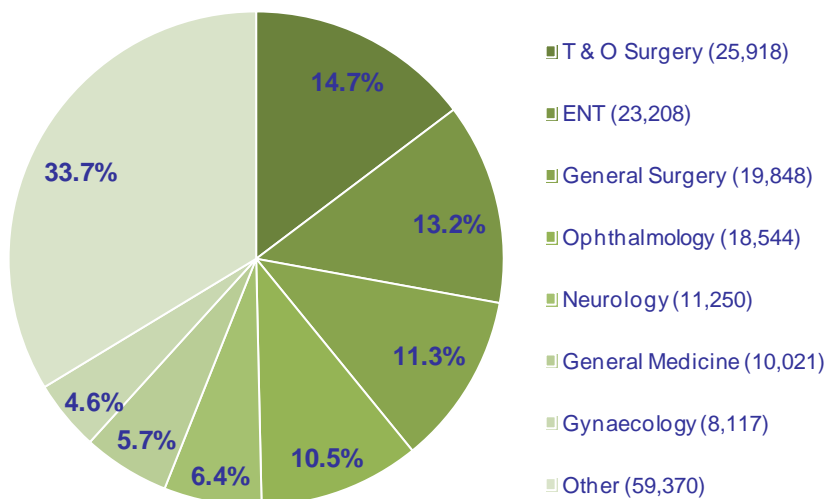
Source: CH3 Return

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 two thirds (69.6%, 176,276) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 31st March 2017, compared with 72.4% (178,279) at 31st December 2016 and 63.2% (136,036) at 31st March 2016 (Table 1).

At 31st March 2017, 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 some outpatient services are not provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks by specialty



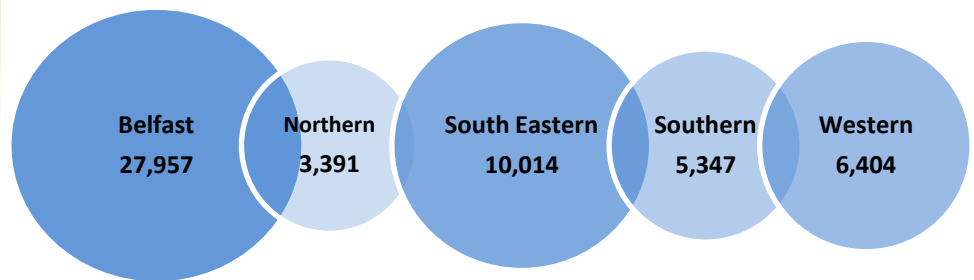
Just under two-thirds (66.3%, 116,906) of the 176,276 patients waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 31st March 2017 were in one of the following specialties: Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Ophthalmology; Neurology; General Medicine and Gynaecology (Table 3a).

Source: CH3 Return

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks at 31st March 2017

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

53,113
patients
were waiting longer
than 52 weeks



Number waiting over 52 weeks

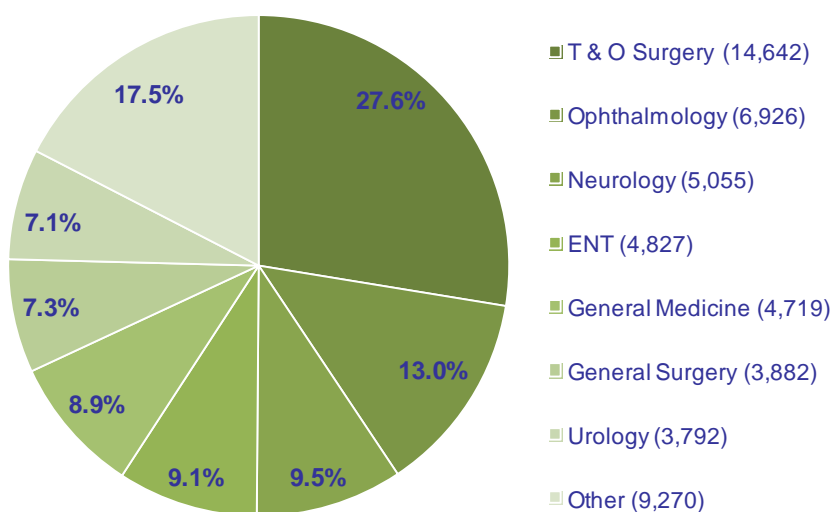
Source: CH3 Return

At 31st March 2017, 21.0% (53,113) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 19.1% (47,072) at 31st December 2016, and 11.4% (24,468) at 31st March 2016 (Table 1).

At 31st March 2017, 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).

More than a quarter (29.1%, 27,957) of patients in the Belfast HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks at 31st March 2017, 20.9% (6,404) in the Western HSC Trust, 18.6% (10,014) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 13.2% (5,347) in the Southern HSC Trust and 10.7% (3,391) in the Northern HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks by speciality



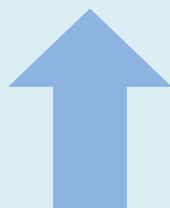
A total of 82.5% (43,843) of the 53,113 patients waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment were in one of the following specialties: Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Ophthalmology; Neurology; Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Medicine; General Surgery and Urology (Table 3a).

Source: CH3 Return

Completed waits for a first outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during quarter ending March 2017

There were
121,786 first outpatient attendances

commissioned by the Health Service



An **increase of 3.8%** on the previous quarter

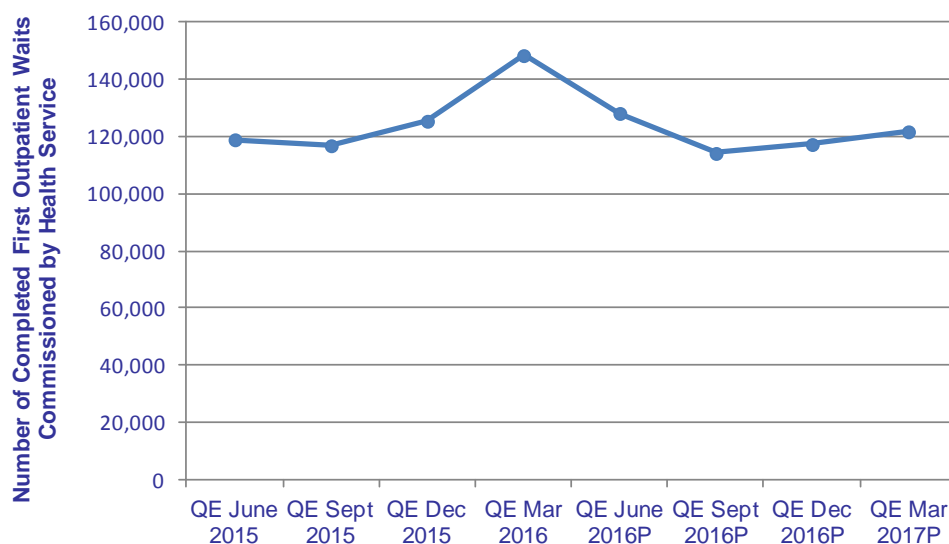


A **decrease of 18.0%** on the same quarter last year

Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

Although the number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment increased between the 31st December 2016 and 31st March 2017, there were 120,064 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending March 2017. This was 2.9% (3,417) more than during the quarter ending December 2016 (116,647), but 3.7% (4,649) less than during the quarter ending March 2016 (124,713) (Table 4).

During the quarter ending March 2017, 1,722 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment within the Independent Sector. This is more than double the number who attended during the quarter ending December 2016 (686), but a 92.8% (22,041) decrease on the same quarter last year (23,763) (Table 4).



Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

^PData is provisional

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector, during the quarter ending March 2017 (1,722) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals during the same period (120,064), provisional figures indicate that 121,786 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by

the Health Service (Table 4). This is an increase of 3.8% (4,453) on the number seen during the quarter ending December 2016 (117,333), and 18.0% (26,690) less than during the quarter ending March 2016 (148,476).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 31st March 2017¹

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (31 st Mar 2017)	Previous Quarter (31 st Dec 2016)	Same Quarter Last Year (31 st Mar 2016)
Total Patients Waiting	253,093	246,198	215,151
Number waiting over 9 weeks	176,276	178,279	136,036
<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	69.6%	72.4%	63.2%
Number waiting over 52 weeks	53,113	47,072	24,468

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–9 & 12-13

Table 2a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st March 2017¹

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	20,787	6,491	4,822	2,759	3,628	29,746	27,957	96,190
Northern	8,201	2,717	2,152	1,124	1,718	12,536	3,391	31,839
South Eastern	10,553	3,313	2,961	1,923	2,606	22,392	10,014	53,762
Southern	10,301	3,478	2,968	1,639	2,138	14,725	5,347	40,596
Western	8,538	2,438	1,708	1,010	1,272	9,336	6,404	30,706
Total	58,380	18,437	14,611	8,455	11,362	88,735	53,113	253,093

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–9 & 12-13

Table 2b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st March 2017¹

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Belfast	21.6%	6.7%	5.0%	2.9%	3.8%	30.9%	29.1%	
Northern	25.8%	8.5%	6.8%	3.5%	5.4%	39.4%	10.7%	
South Eastern	19.6%	6.2%	5.5%	3.6%	4.8%	41.7%	18.6%	
Southern	25.4%	8.6%	7.3%	4.0%	5.3%	36.3%	13.2%	
Western	27.8%	7.9%	5.6%	3.3%	4.1%	30.4%	20.9%	
Total	23.1%	7.3%	5.8%	3.3%	4.5%	35.1%	21.0%	

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–9 & 12-13

Table 3a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st March 2017¹

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	
T & O Surgery	4,779	1,499	1,023	655	875	8,723	14,642	32,196
ENT	6,372	2,210	1,977	1,061	1,622	13,721	4,827	31,790
General Surgery	7,041	2,180	1,912	1,055	1,414	11,585	3,882	29,069
Ophthalmology	4,449	1,491	1,197	824	1,045	8,552	6,926	24,484
Gynaecology	5,313	1,669	1,344	635	852	4,996	290	15,099
Neurology	1,599	673	570	362	496	4,767	5,055	13,522
General Medicine	2,391	627	514	348	451	3,989	4,719	13,039
Dermatology	4,182	1,052	791	410	558	3,999	128	11,120
Urology	1,809	437	381	217	257	2,752	3,792	9,645
Paediatrics	3,452	1,181	787	406	520	2,326	712	9,384
Rheumatology	1,710	658	469	268	374	3,278	2,503	9,260
Gastroenterology	1,638	543	531	297	485	3,584	1,848	8,926
Oral Surgery	1,435	489	435	304	449	3,861	1,223	8,196
Cardiology	3,504	973	576	286	310	1,903	522	8,074
Pain Management	1,259	531	434	288	431	3,482	541	6,966
Thoracic Medicine	1,536	589	478	297	406	3,303	160	6,769
Plastic Surgery	705	257	234	164	196	1,715	511	3,782
Geriatric Medicine	840	264	142	85	101	502	109	2,043
Restorative Dentistry	321	120	134	81	103	585	390	1,734
Other	4,045	994	682	412	417	1,112	333	7,995
All Specialties	58,380	18,437	14,611	8,455	11,362	88,735	53,113	253,093

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–9 & 12-13

Table 3b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st March 2017¹

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	14.8%	4.7%	3.2%	2.0%	2.7%	27.1%	45.5%
ENT	20.0%	7.0%	6.2%	3.3%	5.1%	43.2%	15.2%
General Surgery	24.2%	7.5%	6.6%	3.6%	4.9%	39.9%	13.4%
Ophthalmology	18.2%	6.1%	4.9%	3.4%	4.3%	34.9%	28.3%
Gynaecology	35.2%	11.1%	8.9%	4.2%	5.6%	33.1%	1.9%
Neurology	11.8%	5.0%	4.2%	2.7%	3.7%	35.3%	37.4%
General Medicine	18.3%	4.8%	3.9%	2.7%	3.5%	30.6%	36.2%
Dermatology	37.6%	9.5%	7.1%	3.7%	5.0%	36.0%	1.2%
Urology	18.8%	4.5%	4.0%	2.2%	2.7%	28.5%	39.3%
Paediatrics	36.8%	12.6%	8.4%	4.3%	5.5%	24.8%	7.6%
Rheumatology	18.5%	7.1%	5.1%	2.9%	4.0%	35.4%	27.0%
Gastroenterology	18.4%	6.1%	5.9%	3.3%	5.4%	40.2%	20.7%
Oral Surgery	17.5%	6.0%	5.3%	3.7%	5.5%	47.1%	14.9%
Cardiology	43.4%	12.1%	7.1%	3.5%	3.8%	23.6%	6.5%
Pain Management	18.1%	7.6%	6.2%	4.1%	6.2%	50.0%	7.8%
Thoracic Medicine	22.7%	8.7%	7.1%	4.4%	6.0%	48.8%	2.4%
Plastic Surgery	18.6%	6.8%	6.2%	4.3%	5.2%	45.3%	13.5%
Geriatric Medicine	41.1%	12.9%	7.0%	4.2%	4.9%	24.6%	5.3%
Restorative Dentistry	18.5%	6.9%	7.7%	4.7%	5.9%	33.7%	22.5%
Other	50.6%	12.4%	8.5%	5.2%	5.2%	13.9%	4.2%
All Specialties	23.1%	7.3%	5.8%	3.3%	4.5%	35.1%	21.0%

Source: CH3 Return

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–9 & 12-13

Table 4: Number of completed waits for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service: QE September 2015 - QE March 2017²

Quarter Ending	Number of Completed First Outpatient Waits		
	Within Health Service Hospitals	Independent Sector*	Total Commissioned by Health Service
QE June 2015	118,739	251	118,990
QE Sept 2015	116,659	248	116,907
QE Dec 2015	124,695	789	125,484
QE Mar 2016	124,713	23,763	148,476
QE June 2016 ^P	127,082	1,137	128,219
QE Sept 2016 ^P	113,644	560	114,204
QE Dec 2016 ^P	116,647	686	117,333
QE Mar 2017 ^P	120,064	1,722	121,786

Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

^P Data are currently provisional

* Not National Statistics

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4 & 10–11

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, definitions, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from the following link:
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-march-2017>
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>
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 centralized, 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>

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.
8. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as set out in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction states that by March 2017, 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.
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 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.
10. 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).
11. The number of patients that received an outpatient assessment, commissioned by the Health Service, in the Independent Sector is collected on the IS1 Part 1. 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.
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. Figures relating to outpatient waiting times for the quarter ending 30th June 2017 will be released on Thursday 31st August 2017.

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

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