

INFORMATION  
ANALYSIS  
DIRECTORATE



# Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending September 2017



Department of  
**Health**  
An Roinn Sláinte  
Máinnystrie O Poustie  
[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

# Reader Information

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**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 2017/18 Ministerial waiting time target which states that:

*“By March 2018, 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 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017. It also includes activity for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during the quarter ending September 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-september-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 2018, 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 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017

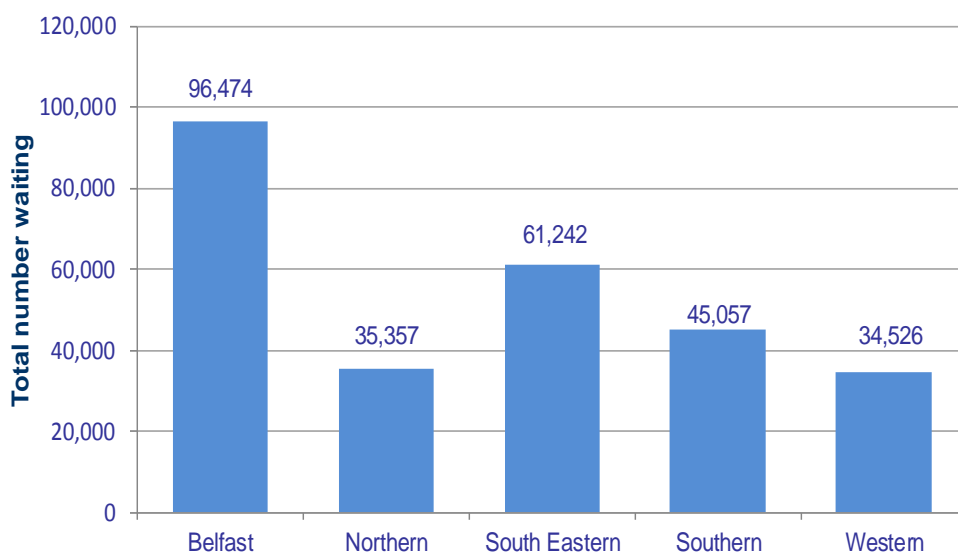
There were  
**272,656 patients**  
waiting for a first outpatient  
appointment in Northern  
Ireland

An **increase of 3.1%** on  
the previous quarter

An **increase of 12.1%**  
on the same quarter last  
year

Source: CH3 Return

At 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017, a total of 272,656 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 3.1% (8,205) more than at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017 (264,451) and 12.1% (29,515) more than at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (243,141) (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).

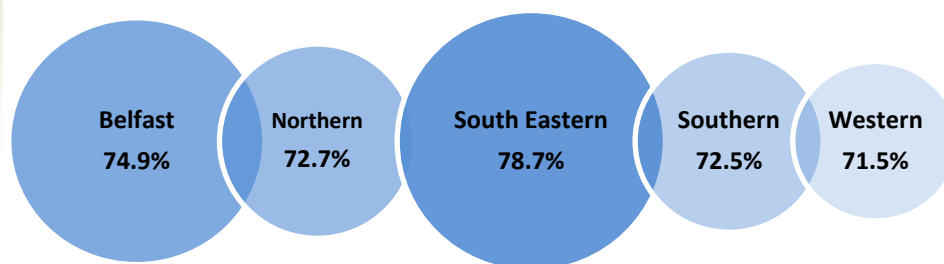
Over one third (35.4%) of those waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 22.5% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 16.5% in the Southern HSC Trust, 13.0% in the Northern HSC Trust and 12.7% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Nearly two thirds (61.6%, 167,852) of the 272,656 patients were waiting for a first outpatient appointment in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (34,913); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery (31,495); General Surgery (30,072); Ophthalmology (25,264); Gynaecology (16,201); Neurology (15,368) and Dermatology (14,539) (Table 3a).

## Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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

**74.6%**  
of patients  
were waiting longer  
than 9 weeks



Percentage waiting over 9 weeks

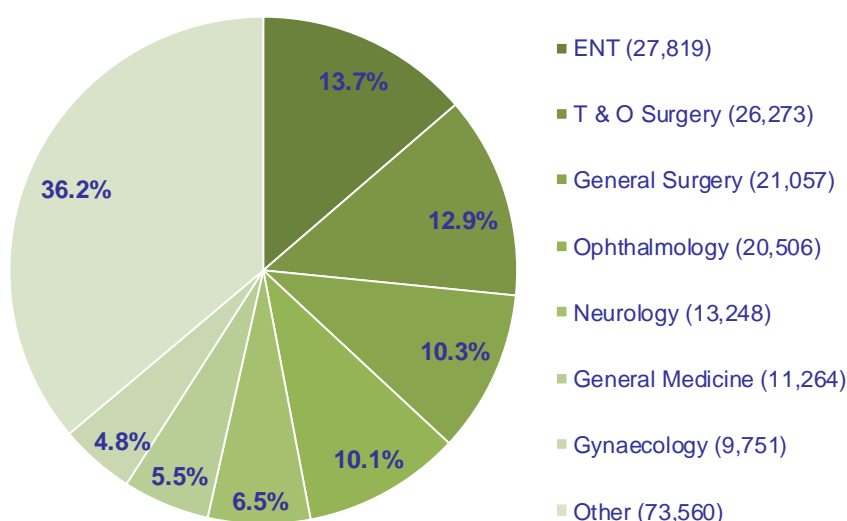
Source: CH3 Return

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.

Almost three quarters (74.6%, 203,478) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017, compared with 71.6% (189,289) at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and 68.8% (167,250) at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Table 1).

At 30<sup>th</sup> September 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 speciality



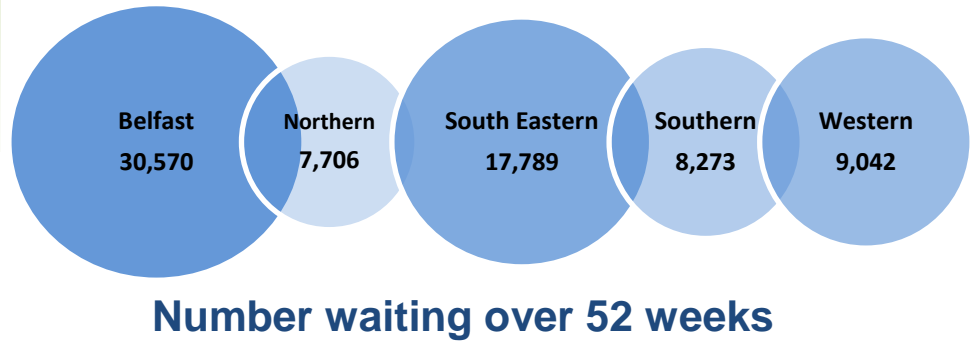
Source: CH3 Return

Just under two-thirds (63.8%, 129,918) of the 203,478 patients waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 were in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; General Surgery; Ophthalmology; Neurology; General Medicine and Gynaecology (Table 3a).

## Patients waiting more than 52 weeks at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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

**73,380**  
patients  
were waiting longer  
than 52 weeks



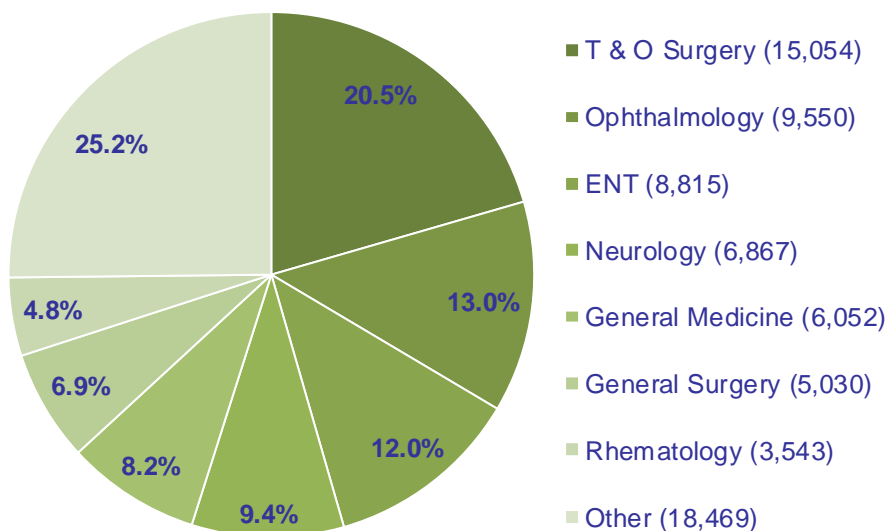
Source: CH3 Return

At 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017, 26.9% (73,380) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 24.2% (64,074) at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017, and 16.3% (39,557) at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Table 1).

At 30<sup>th</sup> September 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).

Almost a third (31.7%, 30,570) of patients in the Belfast HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017, 29.0% (17,789) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 26.2% (9,042) in the Western HSC Trust, 21.8% (7,706) in the Northern HSC Trust and 18.4% (8,273) in the Southern HSC Trust (Table 2a).

### Patients waiting more than 52 weeks by specialty



Source: CH3 Return

A total of 74.8% (54,911) of the 73,380 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; Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Neurology; General Medicine; General Surgery and Rheumatology (Table 3a).

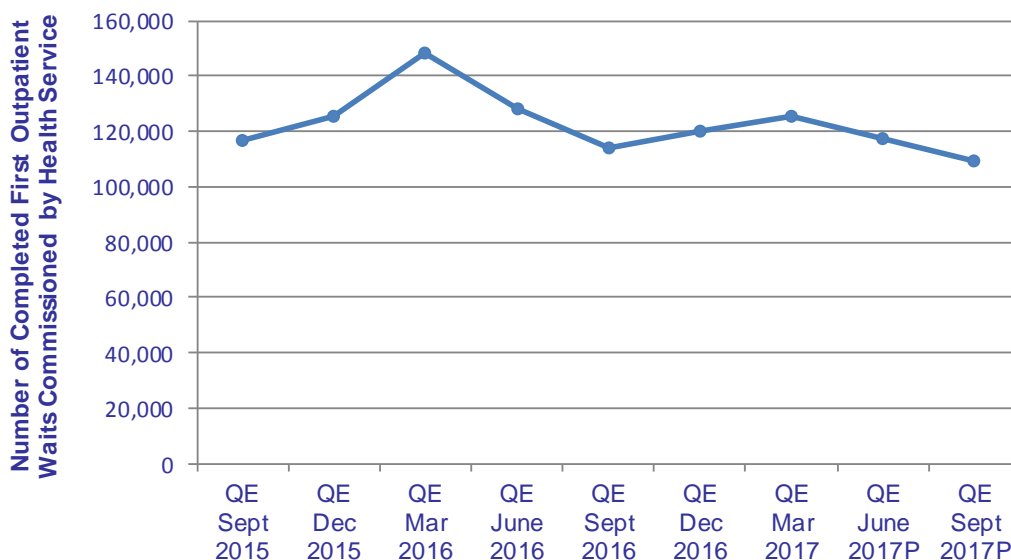
## Completed waits for a first outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during quarter ending September 2017



Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

There were 108,367 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending September 2017. This was 7.5% (8,803) less than during the quarter ending June 2017 (117,170), and 4.7% (5,315) less than during the quarter ending September 2016 (113,682) (Table 4).

During the quarter ending September 2017, 1,107 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment within the Independent Sector. This is almost double the number who attended during the quarter ending June 2017 (567), and more than double the number who attended in the same quarter last year (526) (Table 4).



Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

<sup>P</sup>Data is provisional

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service, within the Independent Sector, during the quarter ending September 2017 (1,107) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals during the same period (108,367), provisional figures indicate that (109,474)

outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by the Health Service (Table 4). This is a decrease of 7.0% (8,263) on the number seen during the quarter ending June 2017 (117,737), and 4.1% (4,734) less than during the quarter ending September 2016 (114,208).

## Appendix 1: Tables

**Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017<sup>1</sup>**

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2017)	Previous Quarter (30 <sup>th</sup> June 2017)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2016)
Total Patients Waiting	272,656	264,451	243,141
Number waiting over 9 weeks	203,478	189,289	167,250
<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	74.6%	71.6%	68.8%
Number waiting over 52 weeks	73,380	64,074	39,557

Source: CH3 Return

<sup>1</sup>Refer 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 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017<sup>1</sup>**

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	17,906	6,290	4,435	4,694	3,956	28,623	30,570	96,474
Northern	7,211	2,453	1,777	1,836	1,626	12,748	7,706	35,357
South Eastern	9,723	3,339	2,593	2,860	2,539	22,399	17,789	61,242
Southern	9,078	3,333	2,505	2,653	2,132	17,083	8,273	45,057
Western	7,565	2,280	1,852	1,844	1,636	10,307	9,042	34,526
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,483</b>	<b>17,695</b>	<b>13,162</b>	<b>13,887</b>	<b>11,889</b>	<b>91,160</b>	<b>73,380</b>	<b>272,656</b>

Source: CH3 Return

<sup>1</sup>Refer 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 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017<sup>1</sup>**

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	18.6%	6.5%	4.6%	4.9%	4.1%	29.7%	31.7%
Northern	20.4%	6.9%	5.0%	5.2%	4.6%	36.1%	21.8%
South Eastern	15.9%	5.5%	4.2%	4.7%	4.1%	36.6%	29.0%
Southern	20.1%	7.4%	5.6%	5.9%	4.7%	37.9%	18.4%
Western	21.9%	6.6%	5.4%	5.3%	4.7%	29.9%	26.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>33.4%</b>	<b>26.9%</b>

Source: CH3 Return

<sup>1</sup>Refer 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 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017<sup>1</sup>**

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	5,127	1,967	1,561	1,804	1,557	14,082	8,815	<b>34,913</b>
T & O Surgery	3,924	1,298	974	1,052	943	8,250	15,054	<b>31,495</b>
General Surgery	6,774	2,241	1,647	1,765	1,549	11,066	5,030	<b>30,072</b>
Ophthalmology	3,482	1,276	935	1,004	823	8,194	9,550	<b>25,264</b>
Gynaecology	4,774	1,676	1,174	1,170	801	4,791	1,815	<b>16,201</b>
Neurology	1,502	618	521	591	488	4,781	6,867	<b>15,368</b>
Dermatology	4,244	1,397	990	979	802	4,574	1,553	<b>14,539</b>
General Medicine	2,172	578	465	465	413	3,869	6,052	<b>14,014</b>
Rheumatology	1,508	578	461	467	430	3,740	3,543	<b>10,727</b>
Paediatrics	2,750	1,028	755	788	640	3,563	1,198	<b>10,722</b>
Oral Surgery	1,221	435	369	467	399	4,010	2,909	<b>9,810</b>
Gastroenterology	1,425	499	406	466	449	3,710	2,553	<b>9,508</b>
Urology	1,637	565	403	420	374	2,780	3,185	<b>9,364</b>
Cardiology	2,950	817	530	440	380	2,339	938	<b>8,394</b>
Pain Management	972	383	424	377	431	3,784	1,208	<b>7,579</b>
Thoracic Medicine	1,408	566	450	554	468	3,121	928	<b>7,495</b>
Plastic Surgery	808	318	238	225	217	1,566	1,304	<b>4,676</b>
Geriatric Medicine	744	220	103	134	148	806	251	<b>2,406</b>
Restorative Dentistry	295	127	98	123	115	724	489	<b>1,971</b>
Other	3,766	1,108	658	596	462	1,410	138	<b>8,138</b>
<b>All Specialties</b>	<b>51,483</b>	<b>17,695</b>	<b>13,162</b>	<b>13,887</b>	<b>11,889</b>	<b>91,160</b>	<b>73,380</b>	<b>272,656</b>

Source: CH3 Return

<sup>1</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

**Table 3b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and speciality – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017<sup>1</sup>**

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	14.7%	5.6%	4.5%	5.2%	4.5%	40.3%	25.2%
ENT	12.5%	4.1%	3.1%	3.3%	3.0%	26.2%	47.8%
General Surgery	22.5%	7.5%	5.5%	5.9%	5.2%	36.8%	16.7%
Ophthalmology	13.8%	5.1%	3.7%	4.0%	3.3%	32.4%	37.8%
Gynaecology	29.5%	10.3%	7.2%	7.2%	4.9%	29.6%	11.2%
Neurology	9.8%	4.0%	3.4%	3.8%	3.2%	31.1%	44.7%
General Medicine	29.2%	9.6%	6.8%	6.7%	5.5%	31.5%	10.7%
Dermatology	15.5%	4.1%	3.3%	3.3%	2.9%	27.6%	43.2%
Urology	14.1%	5.4%	4.3%	4.4%	4.0%	34.9%	33.0%
Paediatrics	25.6%	9.6%	7.0%	7.3%	6.0%	33.2%	11.2%
Rheumatology	12.4%	4.4%	3.8%	4.8%	4.1%	40.9%	29.7%
Gastroenterology	15.0%	5.2%	4.3%	4.9%	4.7%	39.0%	26.9%
Oral Surgery	17.5%	6.0%	4.3%	4.5%	4.0%	29.7%	34.0%
Cardiology	35.1%	9.7%	6.3%	5.2%	4.5%	27.9%	11.2%
Pain Management	12.8%	5.1%	5.6%	5.0%	5.7%	49.9%	15.9%
Thoracic Medicine	18.8%	7.6%	6.0%	7.4%	6.2%	41.6%	12.4%
Plastic Surgery	17.3%	6.8%	5.1%	4.8%	4.6%	33.5%	27.9%
Geriatric Medicine	30.9%	9.1%	4.3%	5.6%	6.2%	33.5%	10.4%
Restorative Dentistry	15.0%	6.4%	5.0%	6.2%	5.8%	36.7%	24.8%
Other	46.3%	13.6%	8.1%	7.3%	5.7%	17.3%	1.7%
<b>All Specialties</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>33.4%</b>	<b>26.9%</b>

Source: CH3 Return

<sup>1</sup>Refer 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 2015 - QE September 2017<sup>2</sup>**

Quarter Ending	Number of Completed First Outpatient Waits		
	Within Health Service Hospitals	Independent Sector*	Total Commissioned by Health Service
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	127,223	1,133	128,356
QE Sept 2016	113,682	526	114,208
QE Dec 2016	119,587	673	120,260
QE Mar 2017	123,988	1,725	125,713
QE June 2017 <sup>P</sup>	117,170	567	117,737
QE Sept 2017 <sup>P</sup>	108,367	1,107	109,474

Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

<sup>P</sup> Data are currently provisional

<sup>R</sup> Data has been revised

\* Not National Statistics

<sup>2</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4 & 11–12

## 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-september-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-september-2017>.
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 1<sup>st</sup> 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-september-2017>.

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 2018, 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 2018, 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 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.
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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017 will be released on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018.



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

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Internet address: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/type/statisticalreports>