

Impact of Covid-19 on Hospital Waiting Times

POSITION AT 30TH APRIL 2020

Introduction

DoH publish quarterly statistical reports and tables on Hospital Waiting Times. However, data covering the waiting times position as at 30th April is not routinely published. This publication will highlight the Inpatient, Outpatient and Cancer Waiting Times positions for 30th April 2019 and 30th April 2020 to show the early impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on services.

This management information (MI) has been drawn from data extracts from the Patient Administration System (PAS) at a point in time and has not been quality assured or processed to the standards required to be official statistics. In addition, this information is provisional and has not been derived to the same methodology as the National Statistics published quarterly so will not be directly comparable, however similar principles have been applied. The data presented excludes medical specialties which are not captured on PAS.

Outpatients

Total Waiting

The number of patients waiting for an outpatient appointment at 30th April 2020 (299,986) was 2.9% (8,486) higher than the same point last year (291,500). This was comprised of a decrease of 48.1% (35,367) in the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks, a 20.3% (20,418) increase in the number of patients waiting over 52 weeks, and a 20.0% (23,435) increase in the number waiting between 9 and 52 weeks and.

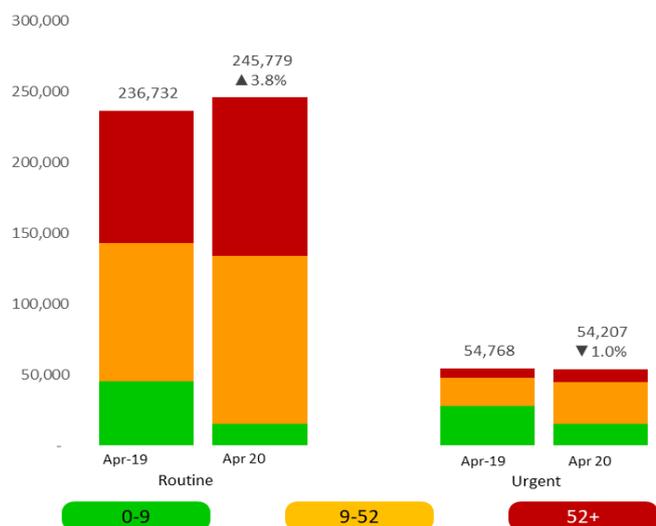
Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 9 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
April 2019	291,500	217,963	100,583
April 2020	299,986	261,816	121,001

By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting routine appointments increased by 3.7% and the number awaiting urgent appointments fell slightly (1%) between April 2019 and April 2020.

There was a 45% (11,959) increase in the number of patients waiting more than 9 weeks for an urgent appointment. This compares to an increase of 20% (39,106) in the number of patients waiting more than 9 weeks for a routine appointment.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Outpatient: April 2019 & 2020 by Urgency



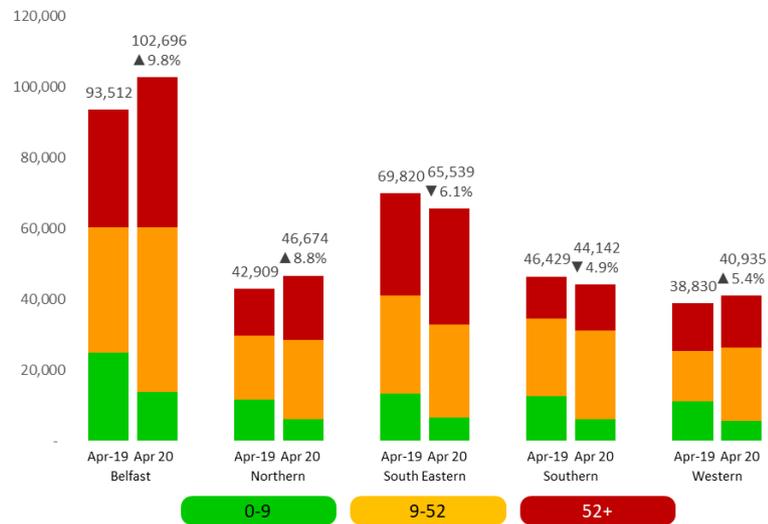
By Trust

Waiting lists in the Belfast, Northern and Western HSC Trusts increased between April 2019 and April 2020.

Across the same period there was a decrease in the number waiting in the Southern and South Eastern HSC Trusts.

In all HSC Trusts, the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks in April 2020 was around half that in April 2019. Across the same period, the number waiting more than 9 weeks increased by between 4.5% in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 30% in the Northern HSC Trust.

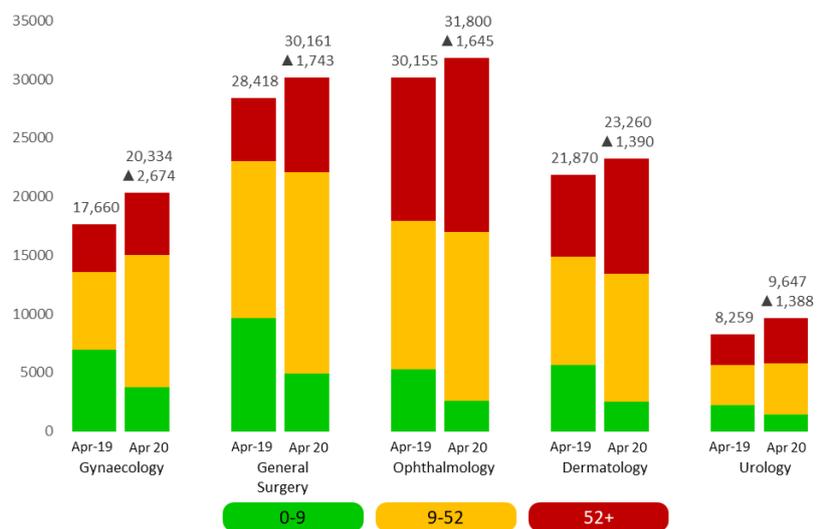
Number of Patients Waiting for an Outpatient Appointment: April 2019 & 2020 by HSC Trust



Specialties with Largest Increases in Number of Patients Waiting

There were 20,334 patients waiting for Gynaecology in April 2020, an increase of 2,674 (15.1%) from April 2019 (17,660). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Dermatology and Urology also showed large increases across this period.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Outpatient Appointment: April 2019 & 2020 - Specialties With Largest Increases



Inpatients

Total Waiting

The number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case appointment at 30th April 2020 (99,263) was 13.1% (11,519) higher than the same period last year (87,744).

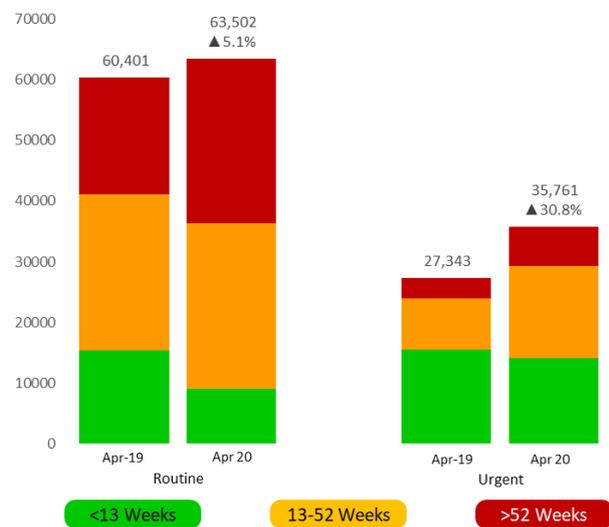
Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 13 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
April 2019	87,744	56,816	22,666
April 2020	99,263	74,081	33,525

By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting urgent appointments increased by 8,418 (30.8%), accounting for 73.1% of the total increase.

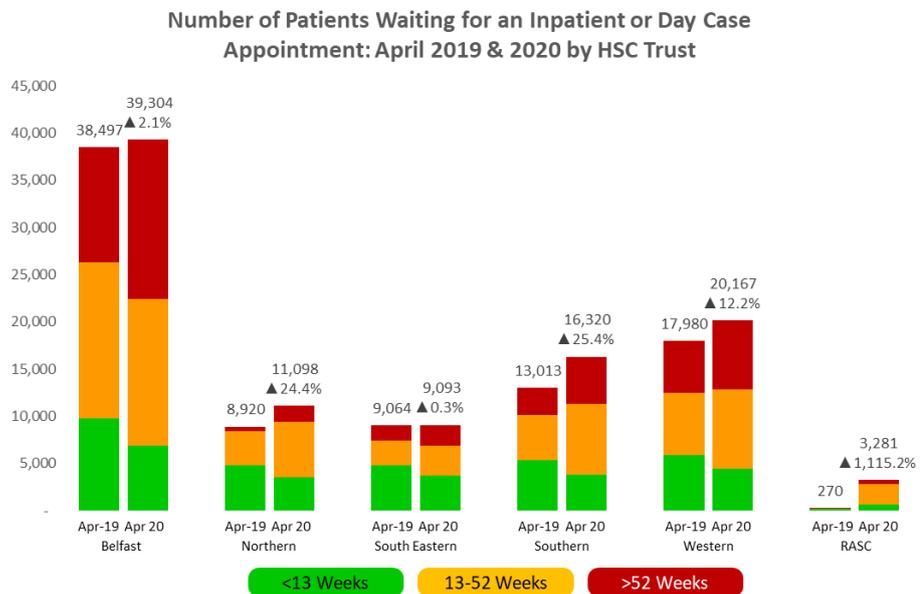
A further increase of 3,101 (5.1%) patients was seen in the waiting list for routine appointments.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: April 2019 & 2020 by Urgency



By Trust

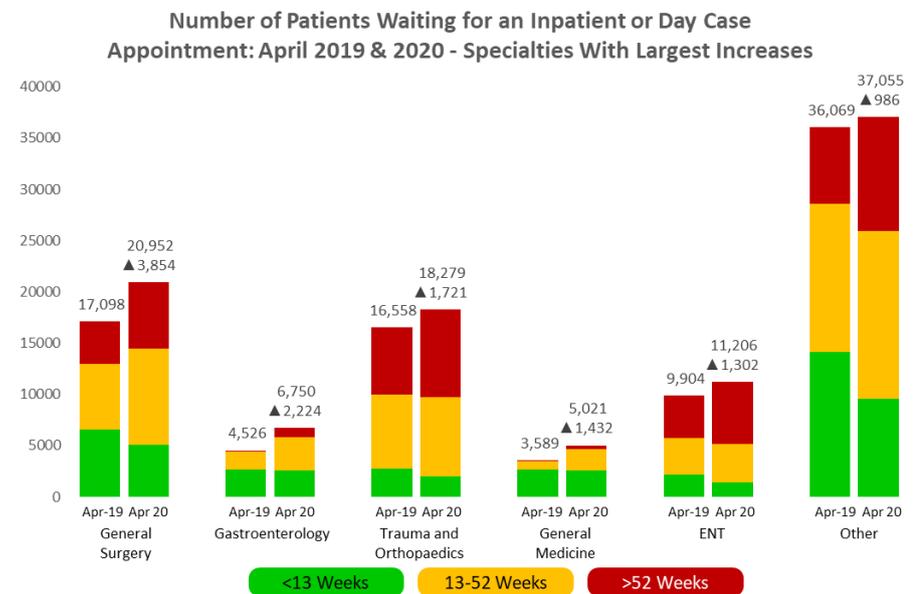
Waiting lists in the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts both increased by around 25% between April 2019 and April 2020. Across the same period there was an increase of a tenth in the number waiting in the Western HSC Trust, while the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust waiting lists remained similar.



As Regional Assessment and Surgical Centres (RASCs) were in the process of being established in 2019, waiting lists at RASCs should not be compared with those in 2020.

Specialties with Largest Increases to Waiting Lists

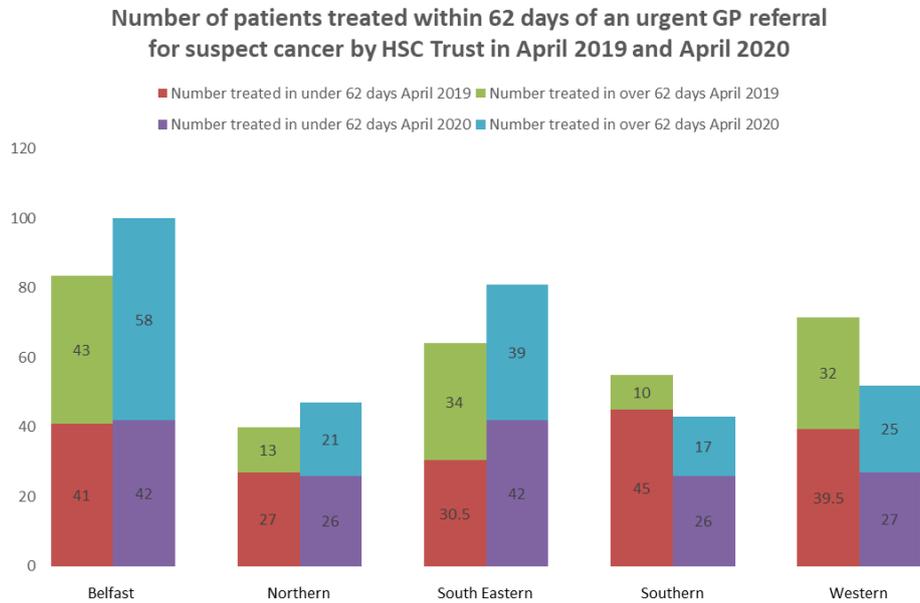
There were 20,952 patients waiting for General Surgery in April 2020, an increase of 3,854 (22.5%) from April 2019 (17,098). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. Gastroenterology, T&O Surgery, General Medicine and ENT also showed large increases across this period.



Cancer

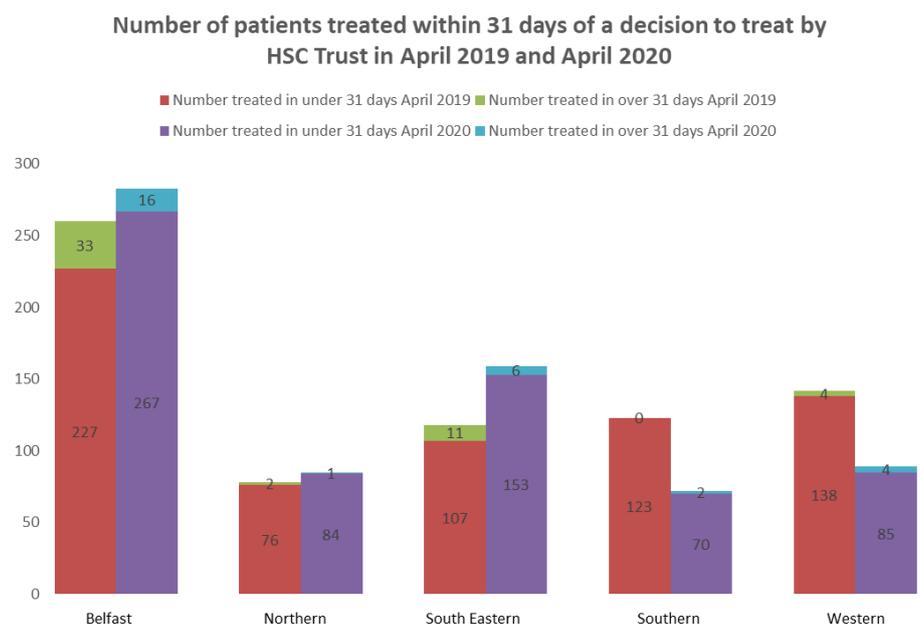
62 day Ministerial Target

There has been a marginal increase in the number of patients who started treatment following an urgent GP referral in April 2020 when compared with April 2019, although the percentage seen within the target of 62 days dropped from 58% to 50%.



31 day Ministerial Target

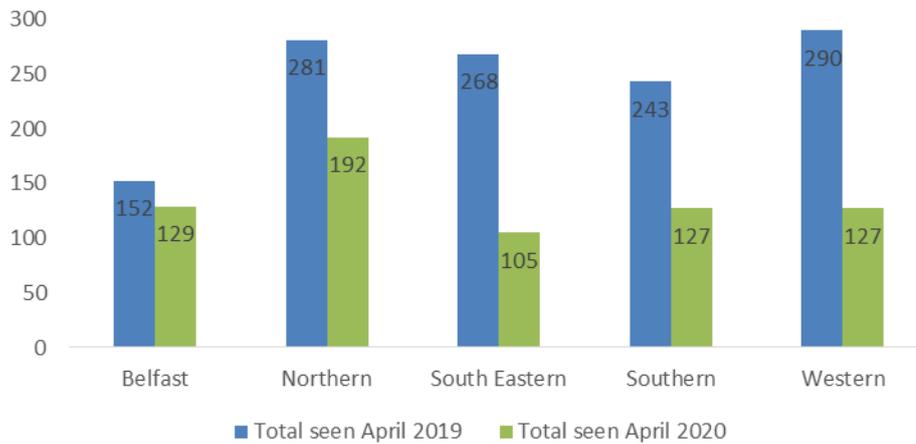
Overall there has been very little change to the number of patients who started treatment within 31 days following a decision to treat. In April 2020 (96%, 659 out of 688) started treatment within 31 days, compared with 93% (671 out of 721) in April 2019. The number of patients who began treatment within 31 days increased between 2019 and 2020 in the Belfast, Northern and South Eastern HSC Trusts.



14 day Ministerial Target

In April 2020, 680 patients were seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer, just over half the 1,234 seen in April 2019. A reduction in the numbers of patients seen following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer was reported across all HSC

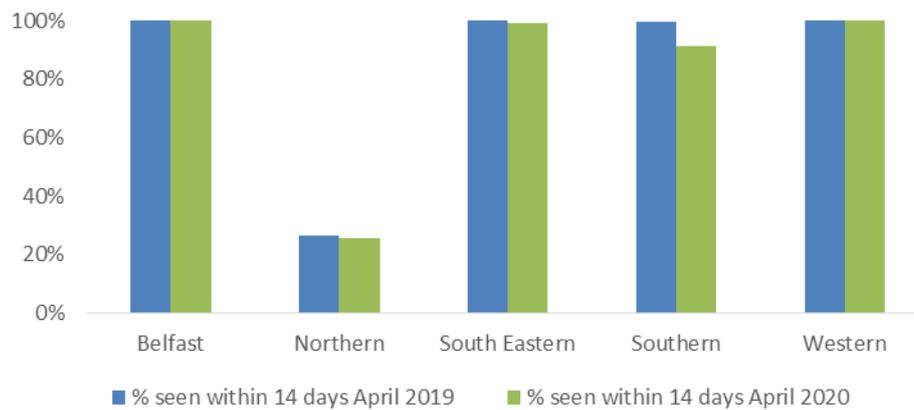
Number of patients seen by a breast cancer specialist by HSC Trust in April 2019 and April 2020



Trusts.

The percentage of patients seen within the target of 14 days also dropped, from 83% to 77%, with this decrease most notable in the Southern HSC Trust.

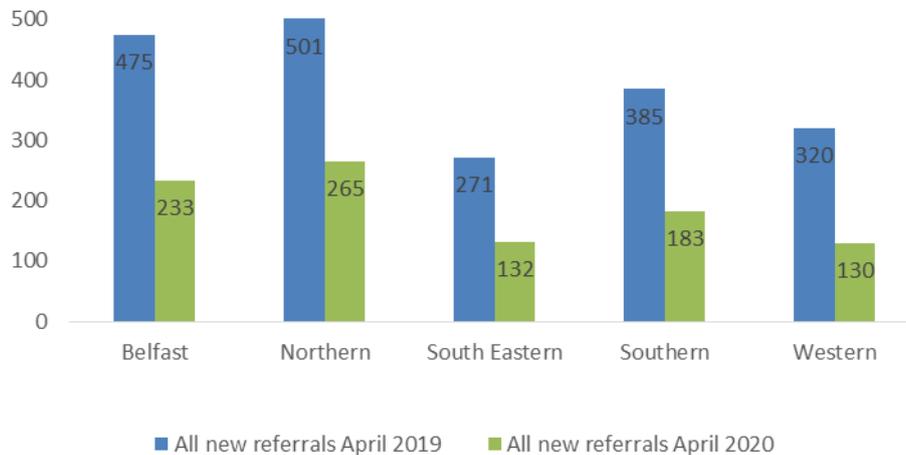
Percentage of patients seen within 14 days of an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in April 2019 and April 2020



Breast Cancer Referrals

New breast cancer referrals in April 2020 (943) were 52% less than in April 2019 (1,952). Within this, urgent breast cancer referrals saw a reduction of 41% (From 1,301 to 773).

Number of new referrals for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in April 2019 and April 2020



All Trusts reported a large reduction in the number of breast cancer referrals in April 2020 when compared with April 2019.

Number of new urgent for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in April 2019 and April 2020

