

Impact of Covid-19 on Hospital Waiting Times

POSITION AT 30th September 2020

Introduction

DoH publish quarterly statistical reports and tables on Hospital Waiting Times. This publication will highlight the provisional Inpatient, Outpatient and Cancer Waiting Times positions for 30th September 2019 and 30th September 2020 ahead of the official statistics for the quarter ending September 2020 published at the end of November (Inpatients and Outpatients) and the beginning of January (Cancer). These data will give an indication of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on services.

This management information (MI) has been drawn from data extracts from the Patient Administration System (PAS) and CaPPs system 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 a small number medical specialties which are not captured on PAS.

Outpatients

It should be noted that Outpatient figures are provisional and exclude a small number of patients not recorded on the Patient Administration System.

Total Waiting

The number of patients waiting for an outpatient appointment at 30th September 2020 (324,408) was 6.0% (18,233) higher than at the same point last year (306,175). This was comprised of a decrease of 33.2% (24,523) in the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks, a 2.2% (2,728) decrease in the number of patients waiting between 9 and 52 weeks, and a 41.9% (45,484) increase in the number waiting over 52 weeks.

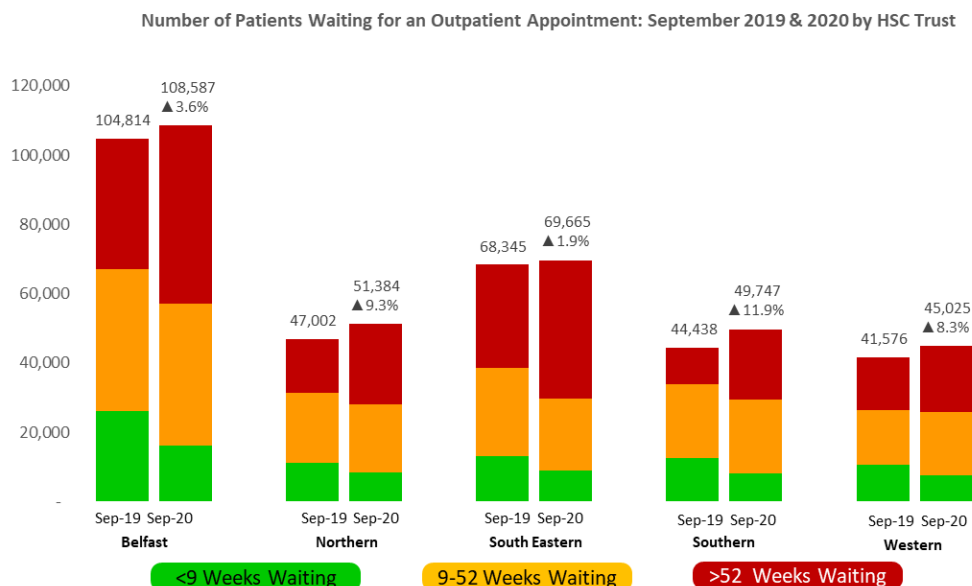
Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 9 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
Sept 2019	306,175	232,239	108,582
Sept 2020	324,408	274,995	154,066

By Urgency

At 30th September 2020 65,957 (20%) patients were waiting for an urgent appointment, with the remaining 258,451 waiting for a routine appointment. A breakdown by priority is not available for September 2019.

By Trust

Waiting lists in all HSC Trusts increased between September 2019 and September 2020.

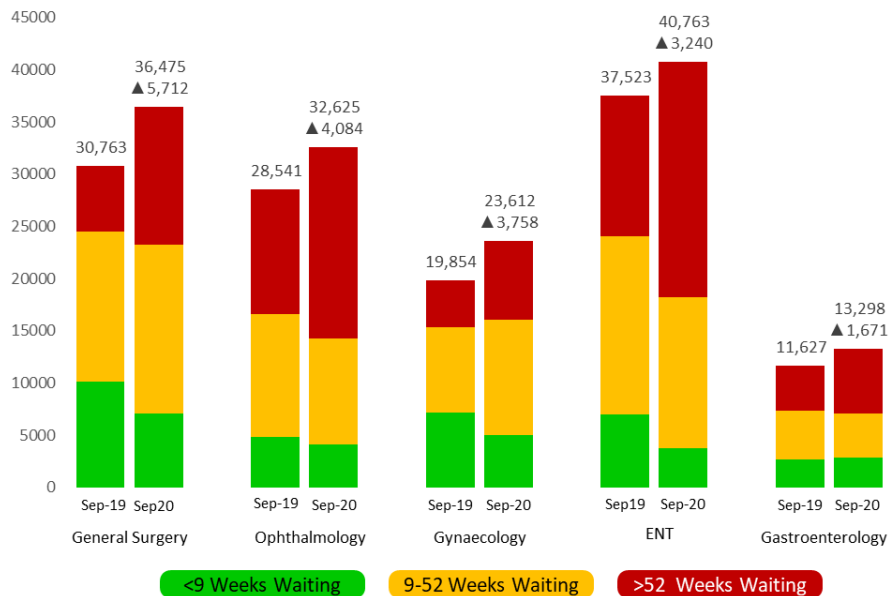


Across all HSC Trusts, the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks in September 2020 decreased considerably from September 2019, whilst across the same period, the number waiting over 52 weeks increased in all HSC Trusts.

Specialties with Largest Increases in Number of Patients Waiting

There were 36,475 patients waiting for General Surgery in September 2020, an increase of 5,712 (18.6%) from September 2019 (30,763). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. Ophthalmology, Gynaecology, ENT and Gastroenterology also showed large increases across this period.

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



Inpatients

Total Waiting

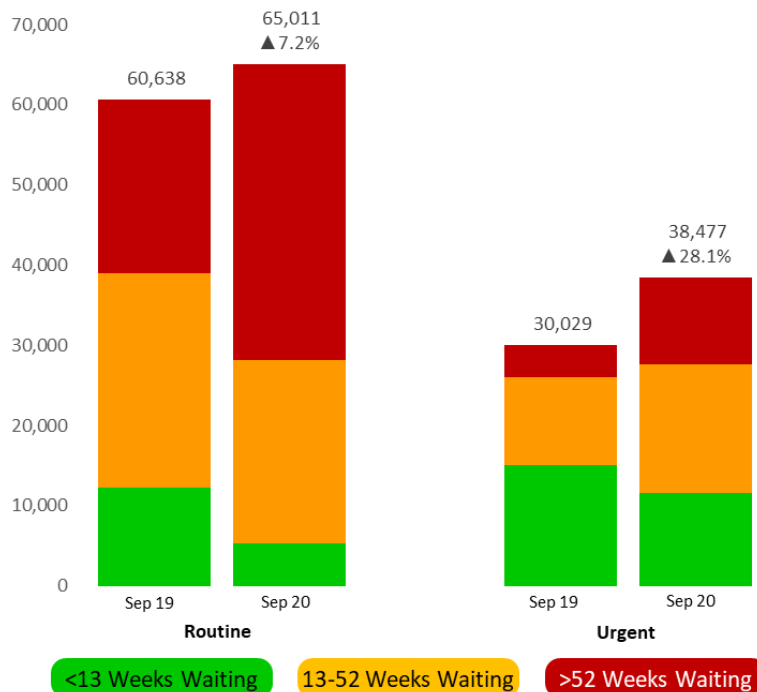
The number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case appointment at 30th September 2020 (103,488) was 14.1% (12,821) higher than the same period last year (90,667).

	Total Waiting	Waiting > 13 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
September 19	90,667	63,293	25,611
September 20	103,488	86,548	47,754
Difference	▲ 12,821 (14.1%)	▲ 23,255 (36.7%)	▲ 22,143 (86.5%)

By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting urgent appointments increased by 8,448 (28.1%), accounting for 65.9% of the total increase. A further increase of 4,373 (7.2%) patients was seen in the waiting list for routine appointments.

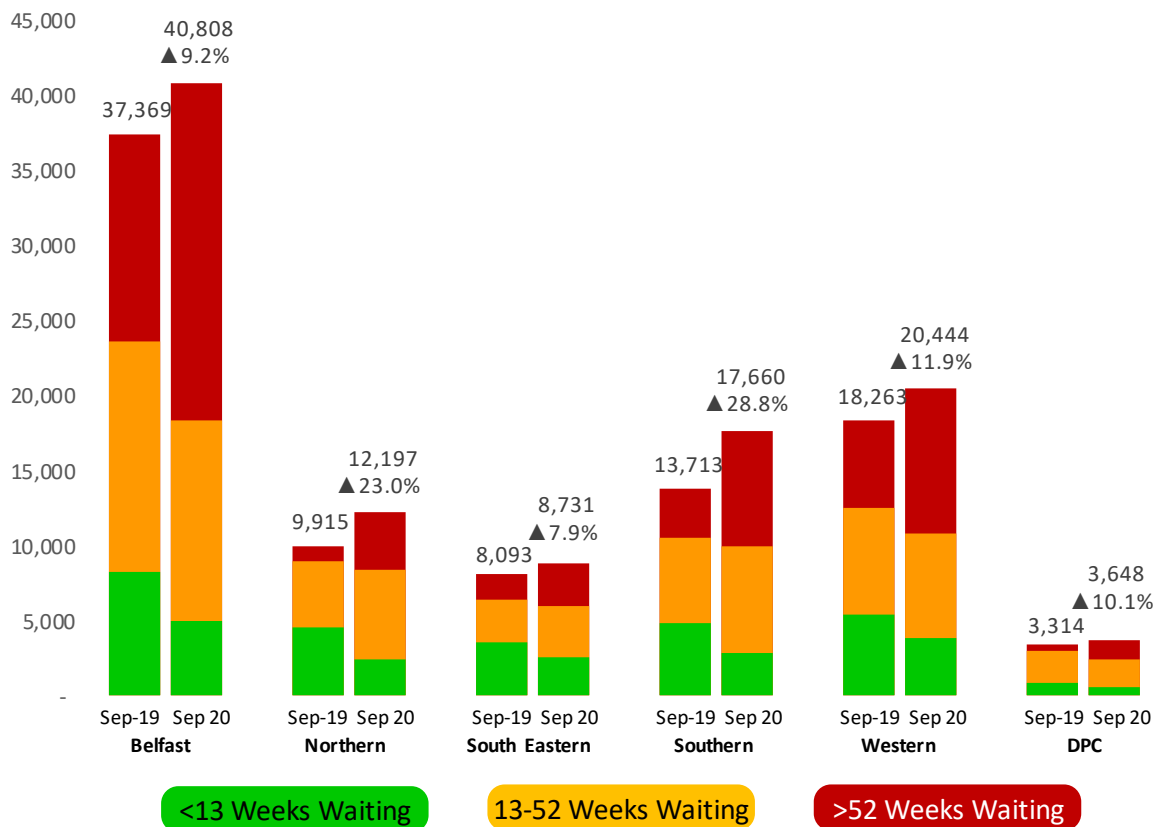
Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: September 2019 & 2020 by Urgency



By Trust

Between September 2019 and September 2020, the Southern HSC Trust waiting list increased by 28.8% (3,947). Across the same period there was an increase of 23.0% (2,282) in the number waiting in the Northern HSC Trust and 11.9% (2,181) in the Western HSC Trust, while the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust waiting lists increased by less than 10%.

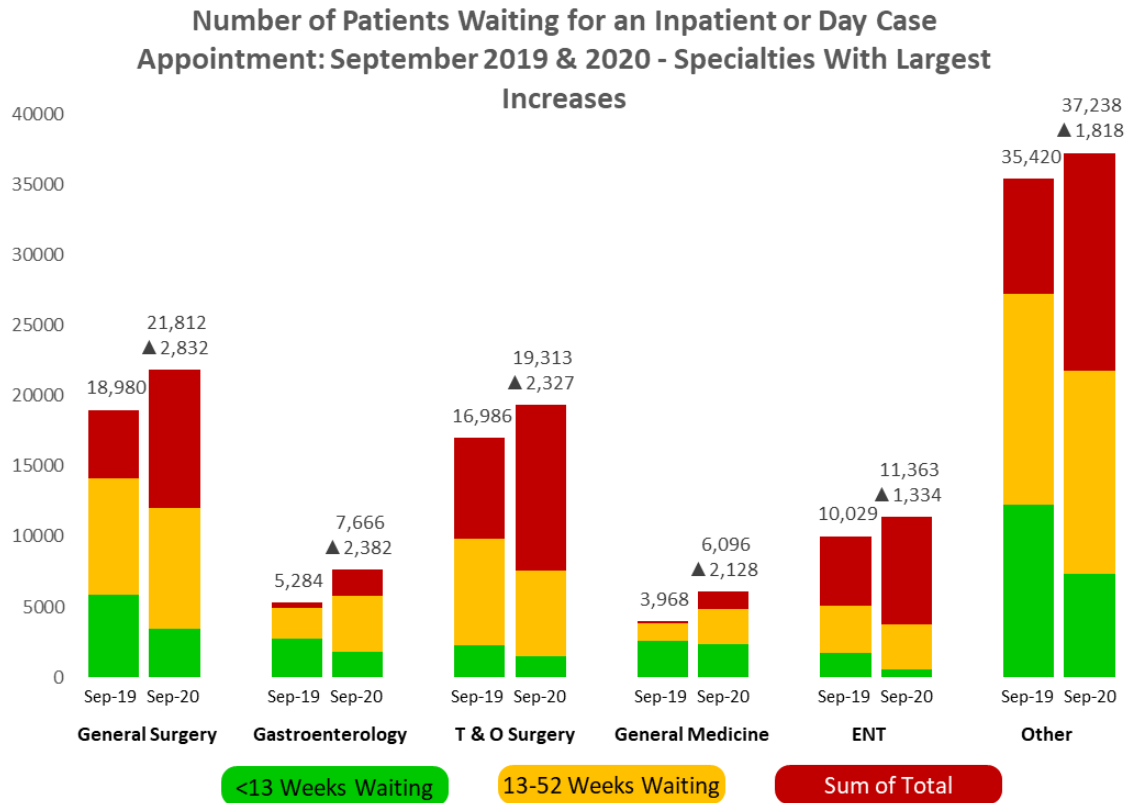
Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: September 2019 & 2020 by HSC Trust



The number of patients waiting more than 13 weeks increased by over four-fifths in the Northern HSC Trust (an increase of 83.3%, 4,478 patients). The number waiting over 13 weeks in the Southern HSC Trust increased by over two-thirds (67.3%, 5,982), the South Eastern HSC Trust increased by more than a third (36.5%, 1,660), the Western HSC Trust by almost a third (29.7%, 3,824) and the Belfast HSC Trust by a quarter (23.0%, 6,698). There were 10.1% (334) more patients waiting at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) in September 2020 compared with September 2019.

Specialties with Largest Increases to Waiting Lists

There were 21,812 patients waiting for General Surgery in September 2020, an increase of 2,832 (13.0%) from September 2019 (18,980). 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.

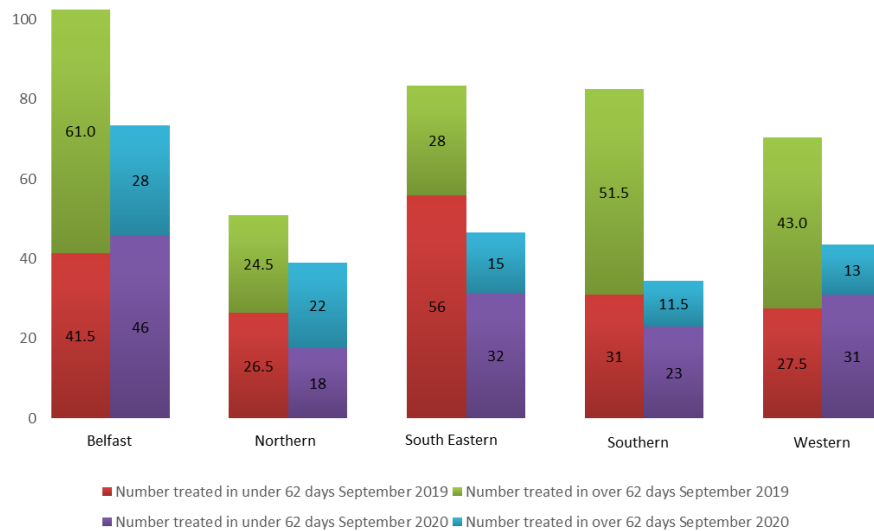


Cancer

62 day Ministerial Target

There was a decrease of 39% in the number of patients who started treatment following an urgent GP referral in September 2020 (237) compared with September 2019 (390), with the percentage seen within the target of 62 days increasing from 46.8% to 62.9% during the same period. However, this should be viewed in the context of the decrease in the number of patients who began treatment.

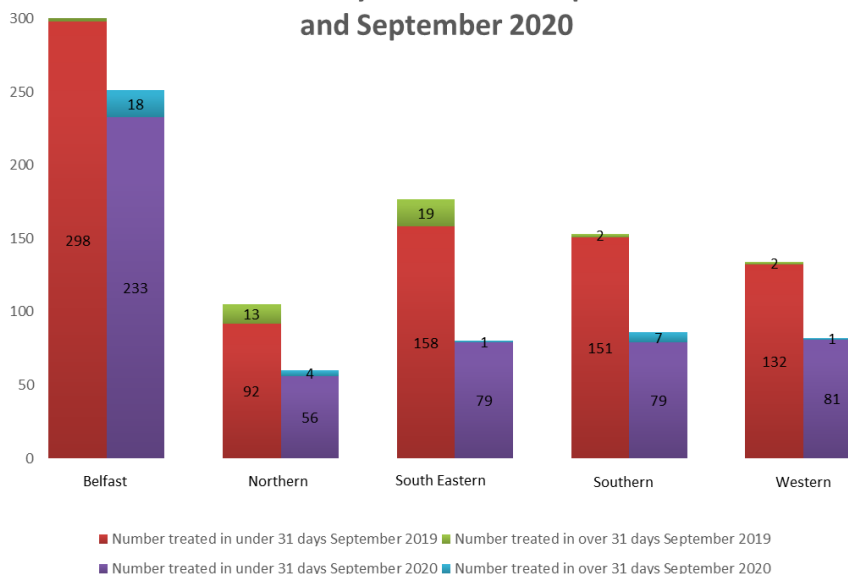
Number of patients treated within 62 days of an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer by HSC Trust in September 2019 and September 2020



31 day Ministerial Target

There has been a decrease in the number of patients who started treatment within 31 days following a decision to treat. In September 2020, 528 out of 559 (94.5%) started treatment within 31 days, compared with 831 out of 909 (91.4%) in September 2019. The number of patients who began treatment within 31 days decreased between 2019 and 2020 in all HSC Trusts.

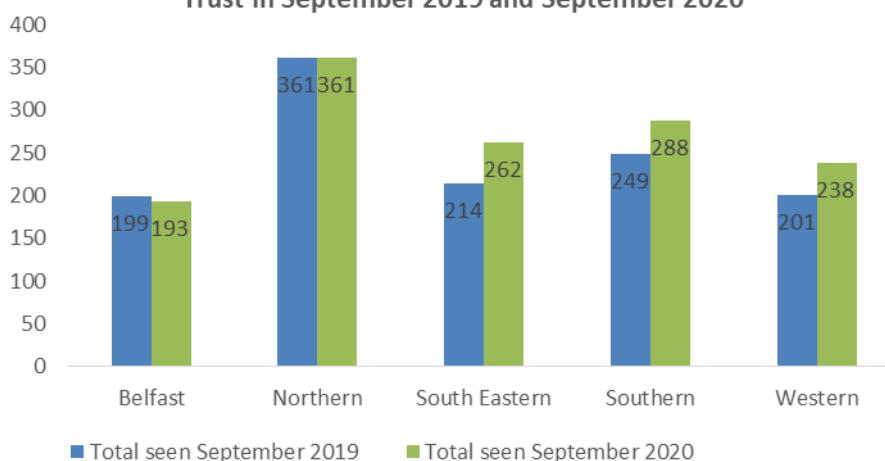
Number of patients treated within 31 days of a decision to treat by HSC Trust in September 2019 and September 2020



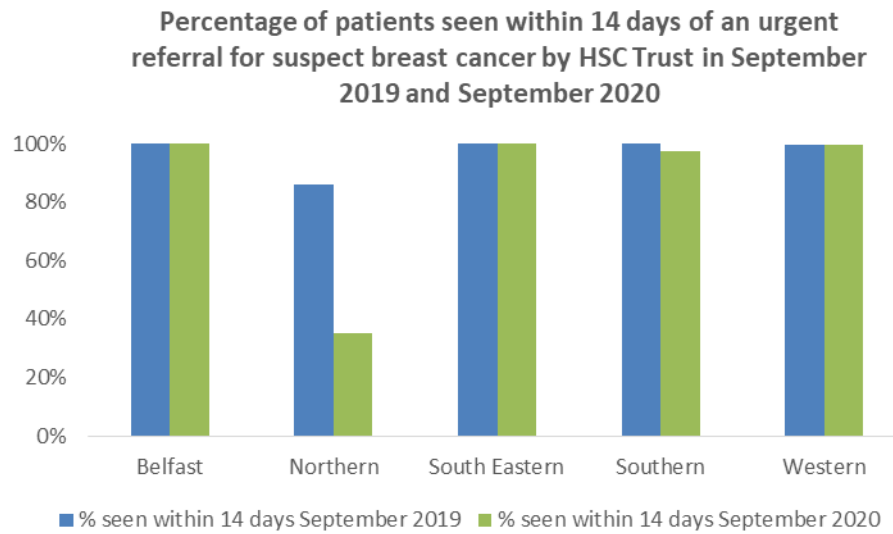
14 day Ministerial Target

In September 2020, 1,342 patients were seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer, an increase of 10% on the 1,224 seen in September 2019. Only Belfast HSC Trust reported a reduction in the number of patients seen by a breast cancer specialist during this period.

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

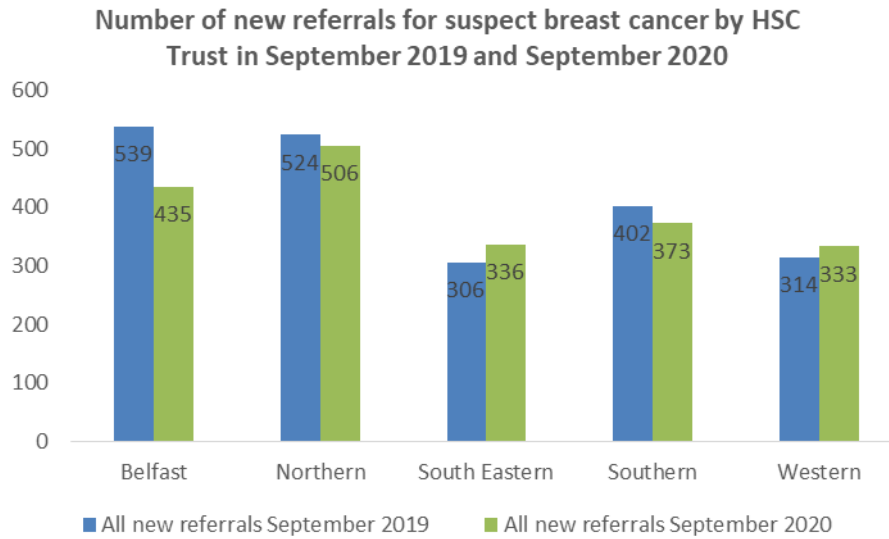


The percentage of patients seen within the target of 14 days decreased, from 95.8% to 82.0%, with this decrease largely attributable to the Northern HSC Trust.



Breast Cancer Referrals

There were 5% fewer new breast cancer referrals in September 2020 (1,983) than in September 2019 (2,085). Within this, urgent breast cancer referrals saw a slight increase from 1,458 in September 2019 to 1,472 in September 2020.



Belfast HSC Trust reported a decrease in the number of urgent breast cancer referrals in September 2020 when compared with September 2019, while all other HSC Trusts reported an increase in the same period.

