

Impact of Covid-19 on Hospital Waiting Times

POSITION AT 30th NOVEMBER 2020

Introduction

The Department of Health publishes quarterly statistical reports and tables on Hospital Waiting Times. This publication aims to show the early impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on services, and highlights the provisional Inpatient, Outpatient and Cancer Waiting Times positions for 30th November 2019 and 30th November 2020.

This management information (MI) has been drawn from data extracts from the Patient Administration System (PAS) and Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS) 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 of medical specialties which are not captured on PAS.

Outpatient Waiting Times

It should be noted that Outpatient figures are provisional and exclude a small number of patients not recorded on the Patient Administration System. Data include those patients waiting for their first consultant led outpatient appointment at a Day case Procedure Centre (DPC) for cataracts.

Total Waiting

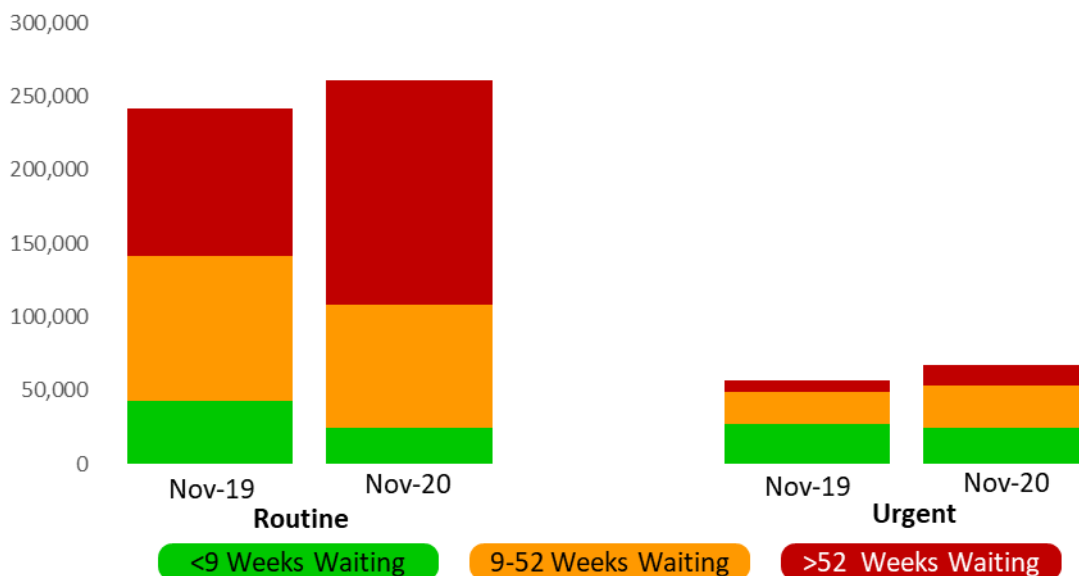
The number of patients waiting for an outpatient appointment at 30th November 2020 (329,034) was 10% (29,874) higher than at the same point last year (299,160). This was comprised of a decrease of 26.5% (18,577) in the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks, an 8.4% (10,080) decrease in the number of patients waiting between 9 and 52 weeks, and a 53.6% (58,531) increase in the number waiting over 52 weeks.

Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 9 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
Nov 2019	299,160	229,011	109,167
Nov 2020	329,034	277,462	167,698

By Urgency

At 30th November 2020, 67,589 (20.5%) patients were waiting for an urgent appointment, with the remaining 261,445 waiting for a routine appointment. This is compared with 57,125 patients waiting for an urgent appointment and 242,035 waiting for a routine appointment in November 2019.

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



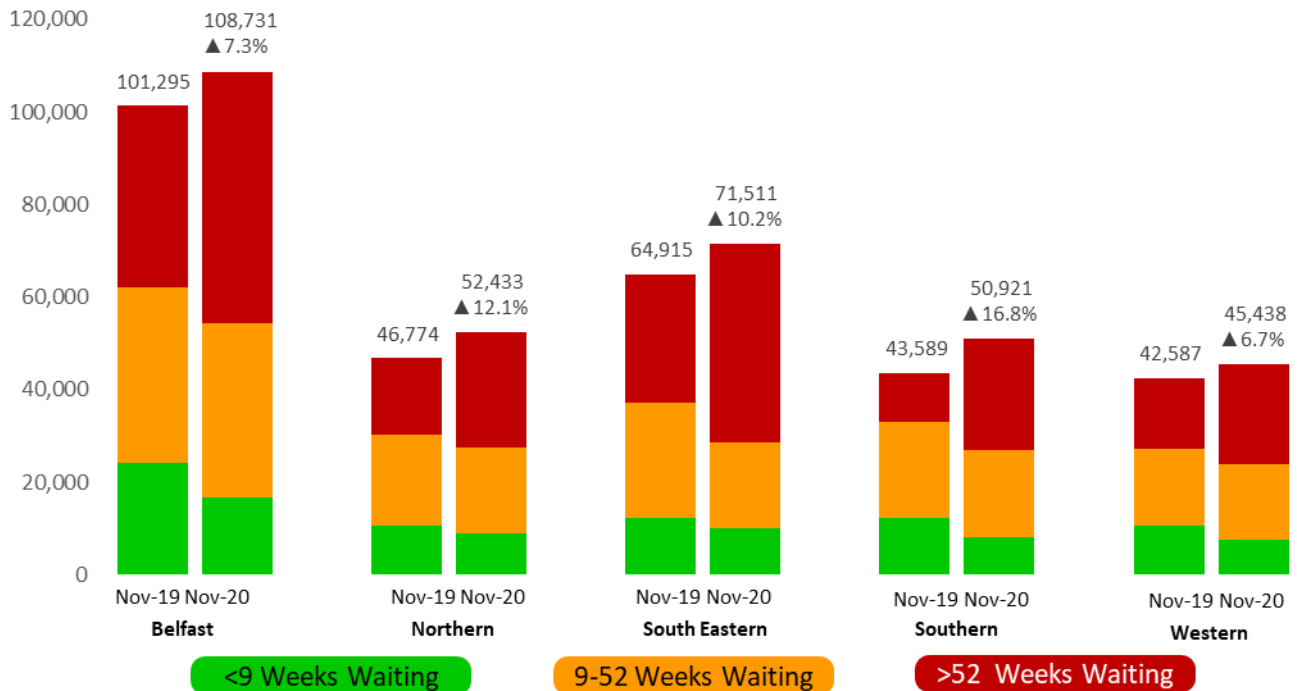
The number of patients waiting more than 9 weeks for a routine appointment increased by 17.7% (35,320), compared to an increase of 44.1% (13,131) among patients waiting over 9 weeks for an urgent appointment.

There were 52.0% (52,398) more patients waiting over 52 weeks for a routine appointment, and an increase of almost three-quarters (72.5%, 6,133) waiting more than 52 weeks for an urgent appointment.

By Trust

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

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

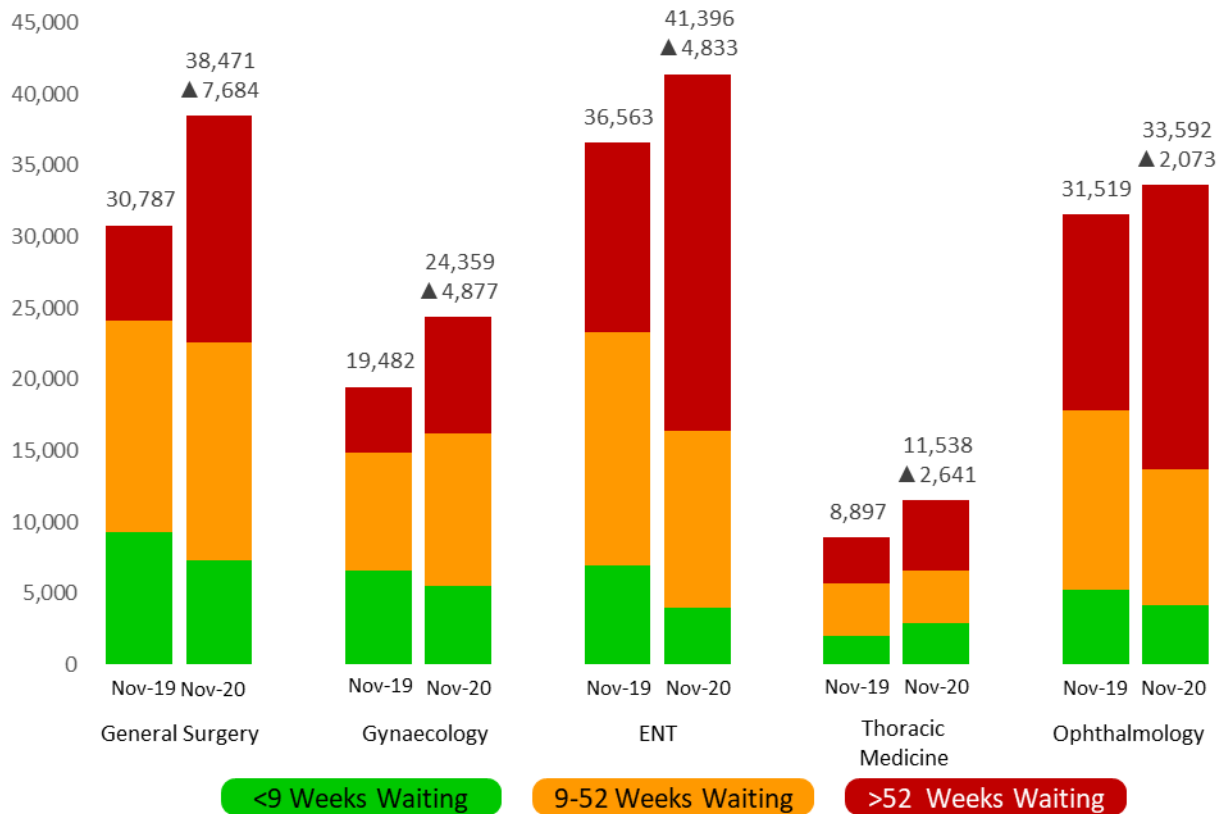


Across all HSC Trusts, the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks in November 2020 decreased from November 2019, whilst across the same period, the number waiting over 52 weeks increased considerably in all HSC Trusts.

Specialties with Largest Increases in Number of Patients Waiting

There were 38,471 patients waiting for General Surgery in November 2020, an increase of 7,684 (25%) from November 2019 (30,787). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. Gynaecology, ENT, Thoracic Medicine and Ophthalmology also showed large increases across this period.

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



Inpatient Waiting Times

Total Waiting

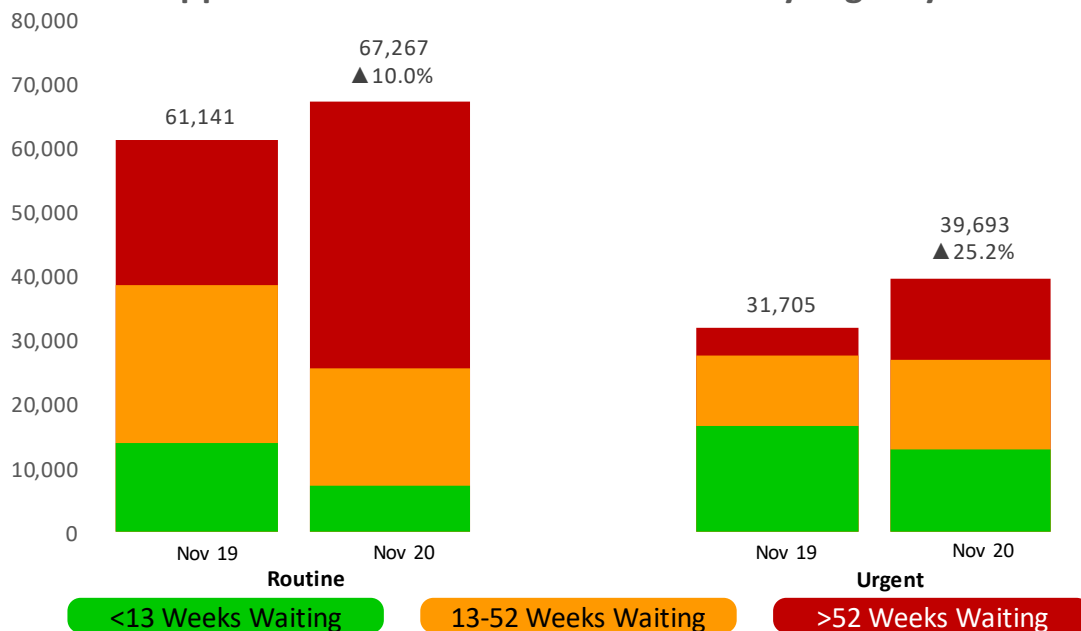
The number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case appointment at 30th November 2020 (106,960) was 15.2% (14,114) higher than the same period last year (92,846).

	Total Waiting	Waiting > 13 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
November 19	92,846	62,260	27,018
November 20	106,960	86,779	54,786
Difference	▲ 14,114 (15.2%)	▲ 24,519 (39.4%)	▲ 27,768 (102.8%)

By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting urgent appointments increased by 7,988 (25.2%), accounting for 56.6% of the total increase. A further increase of 6,126 (10.0%) patients was seen in the waiting list for routine appointments.

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

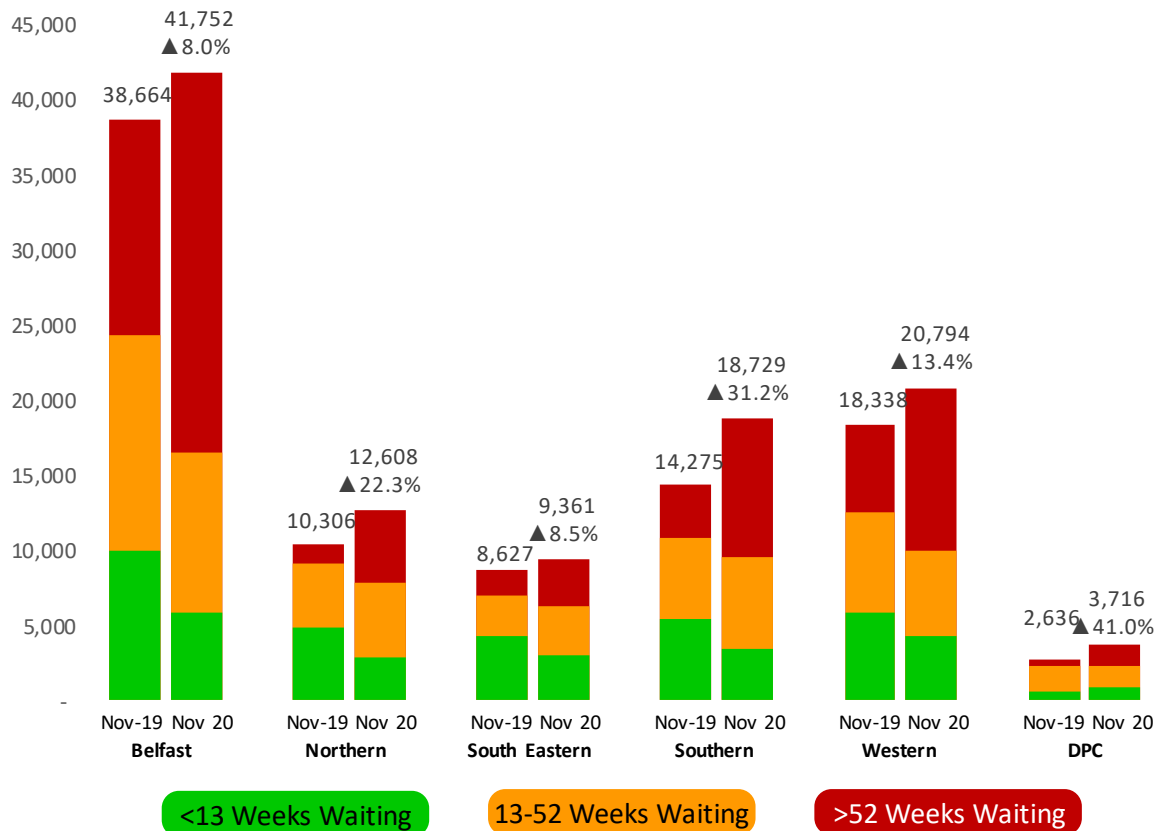


By Trust

Between November 2019 and November 2020, the Southern HSC Trust waiting list increased by 31.2% (4,454). Across the same period there was an increase of 22.3% (2,302) in the number waiting in the Northern HSC Trust and 13.4% (2,456) in the Western HSC Trust, while the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust waiting lists increased by less than 10%.

There were 41.0% (1,080) more patients waiting at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) in November 2020 compared with November 2019.

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

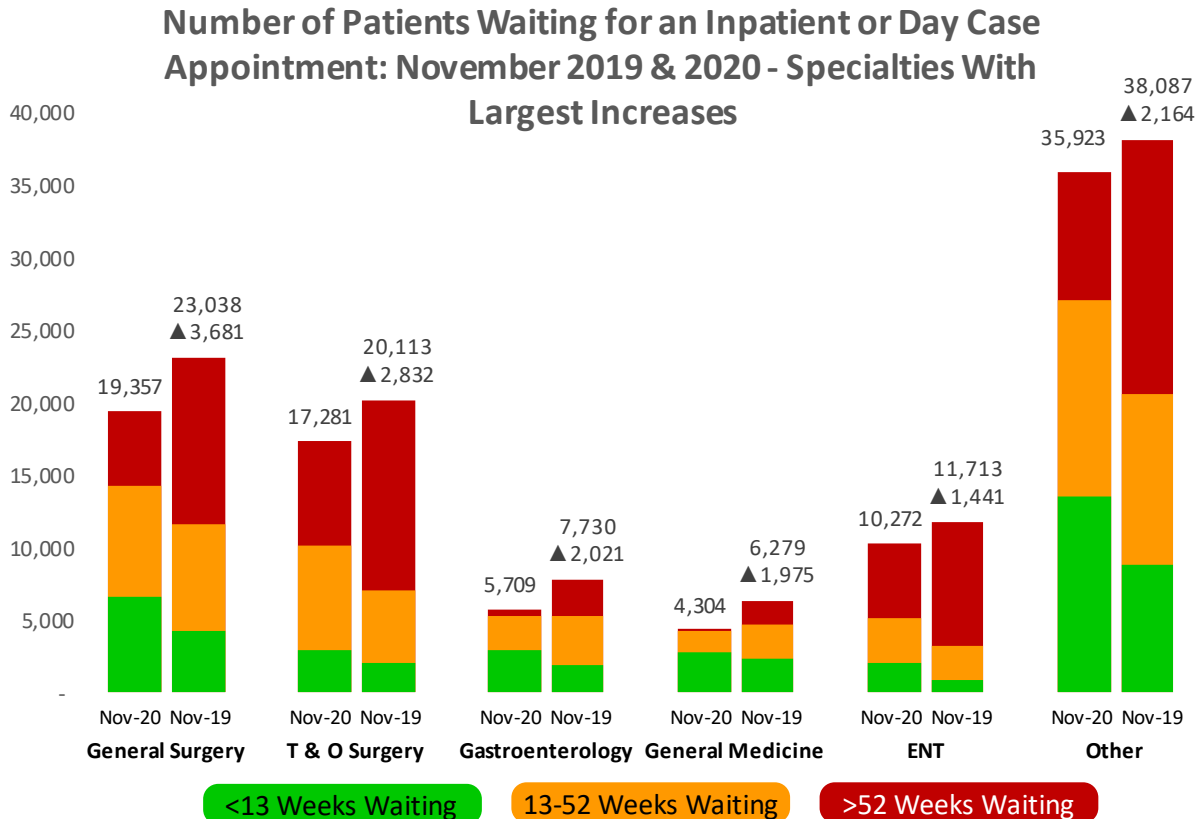


The number of patients waiting more than 13 weeks increased by four-fifths in the Northern HSC Trust (an increase of 80.0%, 4,367 patients). The number waiting over 13 weeks in the Southern HSC Trust increased by over two-thirds (70.8%, 6,331), the South Eastern HSC Trust increased by over two-fifths (43.3%, 1,913), the Western HSC Trust by almost a third (31.9%, 4,002) and the Belfast HSC Trust by a quarter (25.0%, 7,207).

There were 33.1% (699) more patients waiting over 13 weeks at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) in November 2020 compared with November 2019.

Specialties with Largest Increases to Waiting Lists

There were 23,038 patients waiting for General Surgery in November 2020, an increase of 3,681 (16.0%) from November 2019 (19,357). This was the largest proportional increase across this period of any specialty. T&O Surgery, Gastroenterology, General Medicine and ENT also showed large increases across this period.

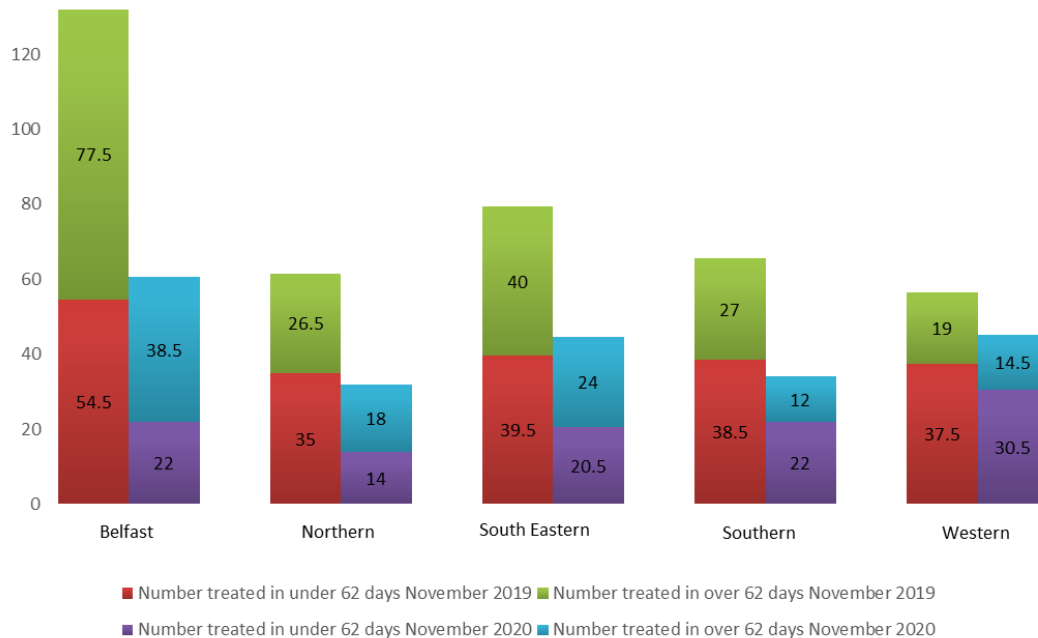


Cancer

62 day Ministerial Target

There was a decrease of 45% in the number of patients who started treatment following an urgent GP referral in November 2020 (216) compared with November 2019 (395), with the percentage seen within the target of 62 days decreasing slightly from 51.9% to 50.5% during the same period.

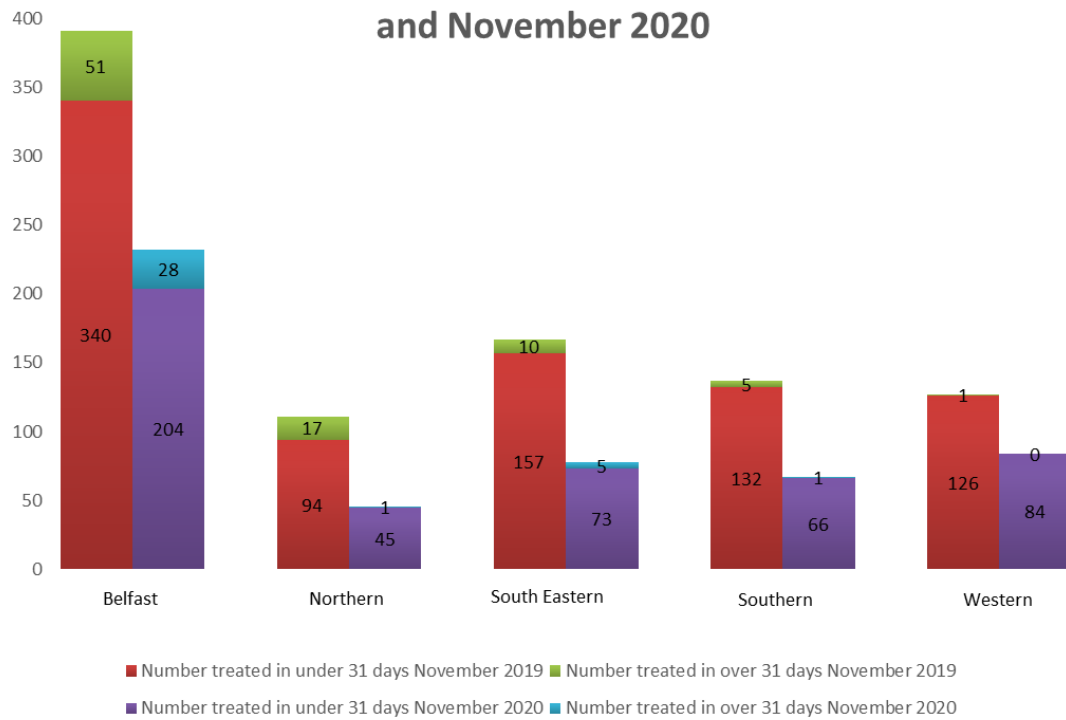
Number of patients treated within 62 days of an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer by HSC Trust in November 2019 and November 2020



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 November 2020, 472 out of 507 (93.1%) started treatment within 31 days, compared with 849 out of 933 (91.0%) in November 2019. The number of patients who began treatment within 31 days decreased between 2019 and 2020 in all HSC Trusts.

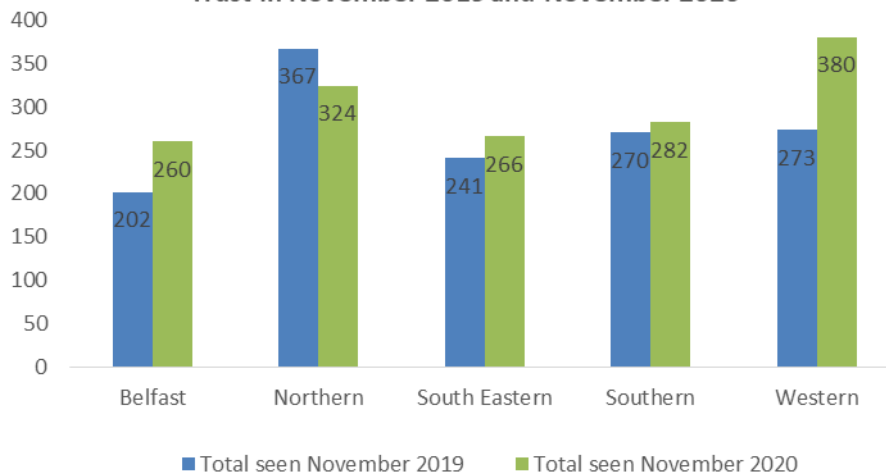
Number of patients treated within 31 days of a decision to treat by HSC Trust in November 2019 and November 2020



14 day Ministerial Target

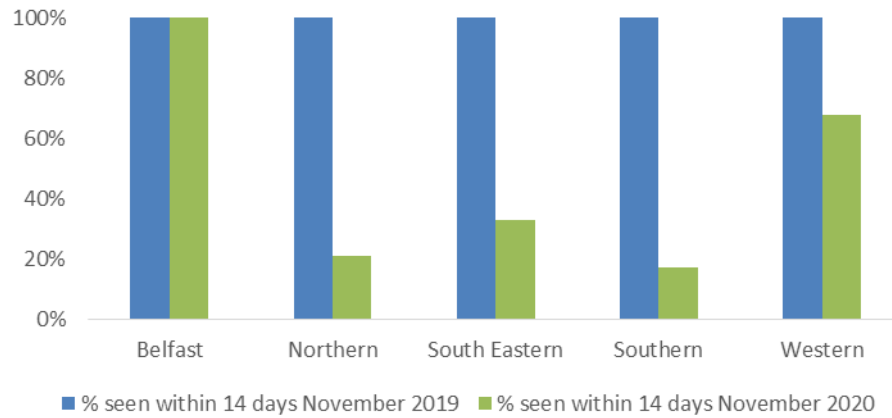
In November 2020, 1,512 patients were seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer, an increase of 12% on the 1,353 seen in November 2019. Only Northern HSC Trust reported a decrease in the number of patients seen by a breast cancer specialist during this period.

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



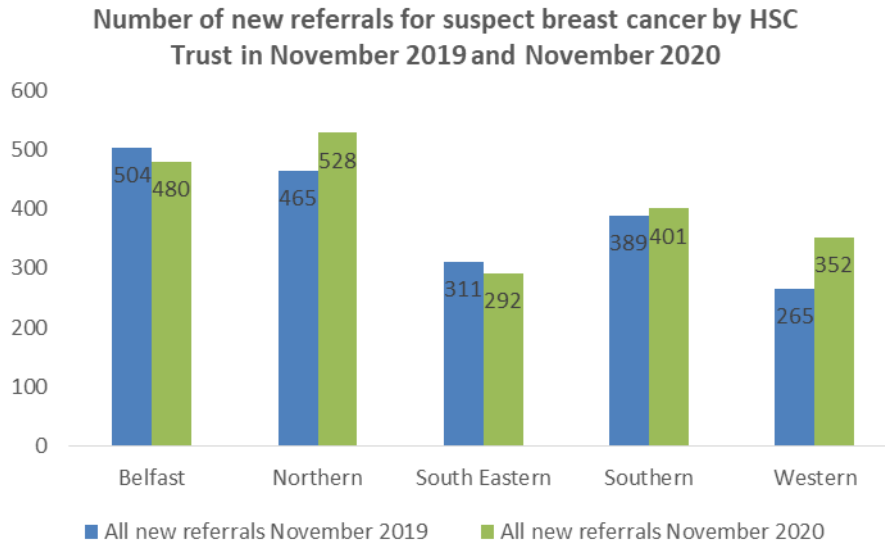
The percentage of patients seen within the target of 14 days decreased from 100% to 47.8%, with only Belfast HSC Trust still meeting the 100% target in November 2020.

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



Breast Cancer Referrals

There was an increase of 6.2% in new breast cancer referrals in November 2020 (2,053), when compared with November 2019 (1,934). Within this, urgent breast cancer referrals saw an increase from 1,363 in November 2019 to 1,502 in November 2020.



All HSC Trusts, except South Eastern, reported an increase in the number of urgent breast cancer referrals in November 2020 when compared with November 2019.

