

**STATISTICAL PRESS NOTICE  
NHS REFERRAL TO TREATMENT (RTT) WAITING TIMES DATA  
APRIL 2015**

Data are published on consultant-led Referral to Treatment (RTT) waiting times for patients who were treated during April 2015 and patients waiting to start treatment at the end of April 2015.

**Main Findings**

- During April 2015, 87.5% of admitted patients and 95.2% of non-admitted patients started treatment within 18 weeks. For patients waiting to start treatment (incomplete pathways) at the end of April 2015, 93.3% were waiting up to 18 weeks.
- 292,166 RTT patients started admitted treatment and 846,613 started non-admitted treatment during April 2015. The number of RTT patients waiting to start treatment at the end of April 2015 was just over 3 million patients.
- The average (median) time waited for patients completing an RTT pathway in April 2015 was 9.0 weeks for admitted patients and 5.5 weeks for non-admitted patients. For patients waiting to start treatment at the end of April 2015, the median waiting time was 5.9 weeks.
- For patients waiting to start treatment (incomplete pathways) at the end of April 2015, 411 were waiting more than 52 weeks.

The following Trusts did not submit any (admitted, non-admitted and incomplete) RTT pathway data for April 2015:

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Barts NHS Health Trust
- Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust
- King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Medway NHS Foundation Trust
- The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust
- Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust

University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust did not submit data on incomplete RTT pathways for April 2015.

Wye Valley NHS Trust did not submit any non-admitted data for April 2015, and did not submit the non-admitted element of its incomplete pathway data.

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust did not submit any data for the former Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust with whom it merged from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.

Factoring in estimates based on the latest data submitted for each missing Trust suggests the total number of RTT patients waiting to start treatment at the end of April 2015 may have been just under 3.3 million patients. See section 5 of Notes to Editors for details of the latest data submitted by missing Trusts.

Detailed tables of waiting times by treatment function (specialty), commissioner and provider are available at:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/rtt-waiting-times/>

**Table 1 – April 2015 Referral to Treatment (RTT) waiting times by treatment function, England**

Treatment function	Admitted Pathways		Non-Admitted Pathways		Incomplete Pathways	
	Total (all)	% within 18 weeks	Total (all)	% within 18 weeks	Total (all)	% within 18 weeks
General Surgery	35,839	85.6%	62,162	94.5%	272,543	90.4%
Urology	18,378	86.9%	31,857	93.5%	154,584	91.6%
Trauma & Orthopaedics	54,374	82.5%	83,757	93.9%	394,664	90.3%
ENT	14,691	83.7%	63,591	95.5%	218,438	93.7%
Ophthalmology	41,222	89.1%	82,658	96.1%	311,545	94.6%
Oral Surgery	15,166	83.9%	30,301	92.4%	134,910	92.8%
Neurosurgery	2,297	83.1%	4,757	89.1%	24,110	90.3%
Plastic Surgery	11,390	87.6%	9,526	95.5%	44,992	90.2%
Cardiothoracic Surgery	2,015	85.4%	1,100	95.0%	6,685	89.4%
General Medicine	3,056	98.4%	16,772	96.9%	44,467	95.7%
Gastroenterology	15,200	97.9%	32,842	93.2%	151,441	94.1%
Cardiology	8,865	90.5%	38,544	95.3%	139,972	94.1%
Dermatology	6,482	91.5%	56,037	95.7%	148,869	96.0%
Thoracic Medicine	1,637	98.8%	20,748	95.2%	63,195	94.9%
Neurology	1,147	97.8%	23,457	92.6%	85,381	94.5%
Rheumatology	1,912	98.8%	19,067	96.1%	57,349	96.7%
Geriatric Medicine	175	98.3%	10,093	98.7%	16,404	97.9%
Gynaecology	20,310	89.4%	62,555	97.2%	179,108	94.7%
Other	38,010	89.5%	196,789	95.7%	577,048	94.3%
<b>England</b>	<b>292,166</b>	<b>87.5%</b>	<b>846,613</b>	<b>95.2%</b>	<b>3,025,705</b>	<b>93.3%</b>

**Table 2 – Referral to Treatment (RTT) waiting times, England**

Month	Admitted pathways			Non-Admitted pathways			Incomplete pathways		
	Median wait (weeks)	95 <sup>th</sup> percentile (weeks)	% within 18 weeks	Median wait (weeks)	95 <sup>th</sup> percentile (weeks)	% within 18 weeks	Median wait (weeks)	95 <sup>th</sup> percentile (weeks)	% within 18 weeks
March 2007	18.8	52+	48.3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
August 2007	15.6	52+	56.0%	7.4	52+	76.1%	14.3	52+	57.2%
March 2008	8.1	27.3	87.1%	3.9	21.8	93.4%	9.8	52+	66.0%
March 2009	7.7	20.0	93.0%	3.8	15.6	97.4%	5.6	29.8	87.6%
March 2010	8.0	21.2	92.0%	3.9	15.4	97.8%	5.2	23.3	91.1%
March 2011	7.9	23.4	89.6%	3.7	15.8	97.3%	5.5	25.4	89.4%
March 2012	8.1	22.2	91.1%	3.6	15.8	97.4%	5.2	20.2	93.3%
March 2013	8.2	21.5	92.1%	3.9	16.0	97.6%	5.5	18.9	94.2%
March 2014	8.8	24.0	89.4%	4.8	17.1	96.3%	5.5	19.5	93.7%
Apr 2014	8.6	23.5	90.0%	5.0	16.9	96.3%	5.9	19.7	93.7%
May 2014	9.1	24.3	90.1%	5.5	16.9	96.5%	6.2	19.4	93.7%
June 2014	9.4	23.9	89.5%	5.4	17.2	96.2%	5.8	19.5	93.7%
July 2014	8.9	23.8	89.3%	5.2	17.4	95.9%	5.9	19.8	93.3%
August 2014	8.9	24.6	87.9%	5.5	17.7	95.5%	6.4	20.4	93.1%
Sept 2014	9.5	24.5	88.3%	6.0	17.9	95.2%	6.2	19.8	93.5%
October 2014	9.3	23.8	89.0%	5.4	17.9	95.2%	5.8	19.9	93.2%
Nov 2014	9.2	24.6	87.5%	5.4	18.3	94.8%	5.8	19.8	93.3%
Dec 2014	8.4	22.8	90.2%	5.1	17.6	95.5%	6.5	20.7	92.8%
Jan 2015	9.7	24.3	88.7%	6.1	18.0	95.0%	6.7	20.6	92.6%
Feb 2015	10.0	25.1	87.0%	5.1	18.4	94.7%	5.6	20.1	93.1%
March 2015	9.1	25.4	86.8%	5.0	17.9	95.1%	5.6	20.1	93.1%
April 2015	9.0	25.1	87.5%	5.5	17.9	95.2%	5.9	20.2	93.3%

Notes:

1. Median and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile times are calculated from aggregate data, rather than patient level data, and therefore are only estimates of the position on average waits.
2. Where the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile falls in the over 52 week time band, the estimates are less accurate. Hence, such figures are shown as "52+" weeks.
3. Admitted RTT pathways are waiting times for patients whose treatment started during the month and involved admission to hospital.
4. Admitted (unadjusted) RTT data were first published in Jan 2007. Admitted RTT data on an adjusted basis were first published in March 2008.
5. Adjustments are made to admitted RTT pathways for clock pauses, where a patient had declined reasonable offers of admission and chosen to wait longer.
6. Non-admitted RTT pathways are waiting times for patients whose treatment started during the month and did not involve admission to hospital.
7. Incomplete RTT pathways are waiting times for patients still waiting to start treatment at the end of the month.
8. Non-admitted and Incomplete RTT data were first published in August 2007.

## **Notes to Editors**

For admitted patients, adjusted data (allowing for legitimate pauses of the RTT clock) is used to measure waiting times.

## **Statistical Notes**

### **1. National Statistics**

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

### **2. Referral to Treatment “pathways” and “clock stops”**

Patients referred for non-emergency consultant-led treatment are on Referral to Treatment (RTT) pathways. An RTT pathway is the length of time that a patient waited from referral to start of treatment, or if they have not yet started treatment, the length of time that a patient has waited so far.

The following activities end the RTT pathway and lead to the RTT clock being stopped:

- first treatment – the start of the first treatment that is intended to manage a patient’s disease, condition or injury in a RTT pathway
- start of active monitoring initiated by the patient
- start of active monitoring initiated by the care professional
- decision not to treat – decision not to treat made or no further contact required
- patient declined offered treatment
- patient died before treatment

### **3. Operational waiting time standards**

Patients continue to have a legal right under the NHS Constitution to access services within maximum referral to treatment waiting times, or for the NHS to take all reasonable steps to offer them a range of alternative providers if this is not possible.

The waiting time standards set the proportion of RTT pathways that must be within 18 weeks. These proportions leave an operational tolerance to allow for patients for who starting treatment within 18 weeks would be inconvenient or clinically inappropriate. These circumstances can be categorised as:

- Patient choice – patients choose not to accept earliest offered appointments along their pathway or choose to delay treatments for personal or social reasons
- Co-operation – patients who do not attend appointments along their pathways
- Clinical exceptions – where it is not clinically appropriate to start a patient's treatment within 18 weeks

The waiting time operational standards for 2015/16 are set out in Everyone Counts: Planning for Patients 2014/15 to 2018/19. These are:

- 90% of admitted patients and 95% of non-admitted patients to start treatment within a maximum of 18 weeks from referral
- 92% of patients on incomplete pathways to have been waiting no more than 18 weeks from referral

Admitted pathways are the waiting times for patients whose treatment started during the month and involved admission to hospital. These are also often referred to as inpatient waiting times, but include the complete time waited from referral until start of inpatient treatment.

Non-admitted pathways are the waiting times for patients whose treatment started during the month and did not involve admission to hospital. These are also often referred to as outpatient waiting times, but they include the time waited for patients whose RTT waiting time clock either stopped for treatment or other reasons, such as a patient declining treatment.

The Department of Health introduced the incomplete pathways operational standard from April 2012 onwards. Incomplete pathways are the waiting times for patients waiting to start treatment at the end of the month. These are also often referred to as waiting list waiting times and the volume of incomplete RTT pathways as the size of the RTT waiting list.

NHS England introduced a zero tolerance of any referral to treatment waits of more than 52 weeks in 2013/14, with contractual penalties for each such wait.

#### **4. Referral to Treatment waiting times data collection**

Referral to Treatment (RTT) data is collected from NHS providers (NHS Trusts and other providers) and signed off by commissioners.

The data measures RTT waiting times in weeks, split by treatment function. The treatment functions are based on consultant specialties. The length of the RTT pathway is reported for patients whose RTT clock stopped during the month.

The Department of Health published the RTT Rules Suite on 28 November 2007. This document was updated in April 2014 and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-start-consultant-led-treatment-within-18-weeks>

Other guidance documents relating to RTT can be found at:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/rtt-waiting-times/rtt-guidance/>

The data return includes all patients whose RTT clock stopped at any point in the reporting period. A column has been provided to enter data for patients whose length of RTT period is unknown, i.e. patients who have had a clock stop during the month but where the clock start date is not known.

For admitted patients, the RTT time is measured on an *adjusted* basis – from the date the RTT clock starts to the date that the RTT clock stops, allowing for legitimate pauses as described in the above RTT Rules Suite.

For non-admitted patients, the RTT time is measured on an *unadjusted* basis – from the date the RTT clock starts to the date that the RTT clock stops, as detailed in DSCN 17/2006.

For patients on incomplete pathways, the RTT time is measured on an *unadjusted* basis. Incomplete pathways represent those patients who have been referred on to consultant-led referral to treatment pathways, but whose treatment had not yet started at the end of the reporting period. These patients will be at various stages of their pathway, for example, waiting for diagnostics, an appointment with a consultant, or for admission for a procedure.

## **5. Data Availability**

Data for admitted patients (patients whose RTT clock stopped with an inpatient/ day case admission) have been published each month since January 2007 on an unadjusted basis.

Data for admitted patients (patients whose RTT clock stopped with an inpatient/ day case admission) have been published each month since March 2008 on an adjusted basis.

Data for non-admitted patients (patients whose RTT clock stopped during the month for reasons other than an inpatient/day case admission) and incomplete RTT times for patients whose RTT clock is still running have been published each month since August 2007.

RTT waiting times data are published to a pre-announced timetable, roughly 6 weeks after the end of the reference month. Publication occurs on a Thursday and is always on or after the 26<sup>th</sup> working day after the end of the reporting month.

Eight Trusts did not submit data on incomplete RTT pathways for April 2015. Additionally, Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (RAL) did not submit any data for the former Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust with whom it merged from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014 and Wye Valley NHS Trust did not submit the non-admitted element of its incomplete pathways data. Factoring in estimates based on the latest data submitted for each of these missing Trusts suggests the total number of RTT patients waiting to start treatment at the end of April 2015 may have been just under 3.3 million patients. The latest figures submitted by missing Trusts are shown in the table below.

<b>Trust</b>	<b>Latest available incomplete RTT pathway data (rounded to nearest hundred)</b>	<b>Month incomplete pathway data last submitted</b>
Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust	20,700	Nov-13
Former Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust	24,400	Sep-13
Barts NHS Health Trust	75,600	Aug-14
Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust	21,100	Nov-14
King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	55,600	Mar-15
Medway NHS Foundation Trust	17,900	Nov-14
The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust	10,200	June-14
University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust	18,800	Feb-15
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust	13,800	Feb-14
Wye Valley NHS Trust*	7,500	Mar-15

Note:

\* To calculate the estimate of the total number of RTT patients waiting to start treatment at the end of April 2015, the partial incomplete pathway figure submitted by Wye Valley NHS Trust for April 2015 has been subtracted and the latest full incomplete pathway figure (for March 2015) added in.

## **6. Average (median) waiting times**

The median is the preferred measure of the average waiting time as it is less susceptible to extreme values than the mean. The median waiting times is the middle value when all patients are ordered by length of wait. This is the midpoint of the RTT waiting times distribution. For completed pathways, 50% of patients started treatment within the median waiting time, and for incomplete pathways 50% of patients were waiting within the median waiting time.

It should be noted that median times are calculated from aggregate data, rather than patient level data, and therefore are only estimates of the position on average waits.

## **7. Interpretation of RTT waiting times**

Care should be taken when making month on month comparisons of these figures. Measures of waiting time performance are subject to seasonality. For example, the presence of bank holidays or the number of weekends in a calendar month both affect the number of working days. Similarly, adverse weather may result in emergency pressure and impacts upon the health service's ability to preserve elective capacity. These factors can affect waiting times and should be considered when making comparisons across time.

## **8. Feedback welcomed**

We welcome feedback on the content and presentation of RTT statistics within this Statistical Press Notice and those published on the NHS England website. If anyone has



any comments on this, or any other issues regarding RTT data and statistics, then please email [RTTdata@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RTTdata@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Additional Information**

For press enquiries, please e-mail the NHS England media team at [nhsengland.media@nhs.net](mailto:nhsengland.media@nhs.net) or call 0113 825 0958 or 0113 825 0959.

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