

STATISTICAL PRESS NOTICE
NHS REFERRAL TO TREATMENT (RTT) WAITING TIMES DATA
DECEMBER 2014 AND ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT 2014

Data are published on consultant-led Referral to Treatment (RTT) waiting times for patients who were treated during December 2014 and patients waiting to start treatment at the end of December 2014.

Main Findings – December 2014

- During December 2014, 90.2% of admitted patients and 95.5% of non-admitted patients started treatment within 18 weeks. For patients waiting to start treatment (incomplete pathways) at the end of December 2014, 92.8% were waiting up to 18 weeks.
- 279,869 RTT patients started admitted treatment and 821,205 started non-admitted treatment during December 2014. The number of RTT patients waiting to start treatment at the end of December 2014 was just over 2.9 million patients.
- The average (median) time waited for patients completing an RTT pathway in December 2014 was 8.4 weeks for admitted patients and 5.1 weeks for non-admitted patients. For patients waiting to start treatment at the end of December 2014, the median waiting time was 6.5 weeks.
- For patients waiting to start treatment (incomplete pathways) at the end of December 2014, 399 were waiting more than 52 weeks.

The following Trusts did not submit any (admitted, non-admitted and incomplete) RTT pathway data for December 2014:

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Barts NHS Health Trust
- Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust
- Medway NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
- The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust
- Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust

The following Trust did not submit data on incomplete RTT pathways for Dec 2014:

- Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust

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 1st 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 December 2014 may have been just under 3.2 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/>

Main Findings – 2014 Annual report

- In 2014, 89.3% of admitted and 95.8% of non-admitted RTT patients started their treatment within 18 weeks of referral. The operational standard for admitted pathways was missed nationally in nine months of 2014 and the non-admitted standard was missed in one month. Performance against the admitted and non-admitted standards from July to November 2014 was influenced by the commissioning of additional consultant-led elective treatments, focusing particularly on longer waiters.
- The operational standard for incomplete pathways was met nationally in all 12 months of 2014.
- Between 2009 and early 2013, the overall trend in performance against the admitted and non-admitted standard was broadly stable. Since April 2013, there has been a reduction in the percentage of patients treated within 18 weeks in every month compared to the equivalent month in the previous year for both admitted and non-admitted pathways. This year-on-year decrease became more marked in 2014, particularly for admitted pathways.
- Since August 2013, there has been a reduction in the percentage of incomplete pathways within 18 weeks in every month compared to the same month in the previous year. During 2014, performance ranged between 92.8% (at the end of December 2014) and 93.7% (at the end of March, April, May, and June 2014).
- In 2014, half of patients waited less than just over nine weeks to start admitted treatment and less than five and a half weeks to start non-admitted treatment. Half of those patients waiting for treatment at the end of the month had been waiting less than six weeks.
- Including estimates for missing trusts, the number of RTT patients who started admitted consultant-led treatment in 2014 was higher than in the previous year. An average of 15,200 RTT patients started admitted treatment per working day in 2014, an increase of 4% on the previous year.
- Between April and December 2014, an average of 42,900 patients started non-admitted treatment per working day, including estimates for missing trusts. This is an increase of 7% on the same period in the previous year.

- During 2014, the RTT waiting list was on average around 330,000 higher than the same months in 2013, including estimates for missing trusts.

The full annual statistical report on consultant-led RTT waiting times can be found via the following link:

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

Table 1 – December 2014 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	33,847	89.2%	59,836	95.5%	257,610	91.0%
Urology	18,179	90.4%	31,771	95.2%	151,523	91.9%
Trauma & Orthopaedics	52,485	86.6%	83,539	95.0%	393,834	90.7%
ENT	13,612	86.5%	61,786	95.7%	192,744	93.2%
Ophthalmology	39,485	90.7%	77,115	96.1%	302,900	94.2%
Oral Surgery	13,785	88.9%	29,078	94.0%	133,741	93.2%
Neurosurgery	2,287	84.7%	4,629	91.6%	26,621	88.6%
Plastic Surgery	11,255	90.4%	9,141	96.1%	47,031	89.8%
Cardiothoracic Surgery	1,759	87.1%	1,039	96.5%	7,815	89.8%
General Medicine	2,910	97.8%	16,524	96.5%	46,656	94.6%
Gastroenterology	13,428	98.0%	28,505	93.3%	134,608	93.3%
Cardiology	8,560	91.7%	37,100	95.8%	131,809	93.5%
Dermatology	6,763	91.0%	58,247	94.6%	151,811	93.8%
Thoracic Medicine	1,516	98.9%	18,546	95.5%	57,154	94.3%
Neurology	1,068	96.7%	23,412	92.9%	85,958	93.4%
Rheumatology	1,752	98.5%	20,746	95.7%	54,466	95.1%
Geriatric Medicine	137	100.0%	9,437	98.7%	17,095	97.2%
Gynaecology	20,293	92.8%	60,589	97.9%	172,794	95.1%
Other	36,748	91.5%	190,165	95.6%	562,344	93.1%
England	279,869	90.2%	821,205	95.5%	2,928,514	92.8%

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

Month	Admitted pathways			Non-Admitted pathways			Incomplete pathways		
	Median wait (weeks)	95 th percentile (weeks)	% within 18 weeks	Median wait (weeks)	95 th percentile (weeks)	% within 18 weeks	Median wait (weeks)	95 th 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%
April 2013	8.5	21.9	91.6%	5.1	16.1	97.2%	5.6	18.8	94.5%
May 2013	8.7	22.4	92.1%	4.8	15.9	97.5%	5.6	18.2	94.8%
June 2013	8.7	21.9	91.7%	5.2	16.3	97.4%	5.7	18.5	94.6%
July 2013	8.6	21.4	92.1%	5.0	16.3	97.2%	5.6	18.7	94.4%
August 2013	8.6	21.4	92.2%	5.2	16.4	97.2%	6.2	18.8	94.2%
Sept 2013	9.1	21.9	91.5%	5.7	16.8	96.8%	6.0	19.0	94.2%
October 2013	9.0	21.9	91.4%	5.1	16.9	96.7%	5.6	18.9	94.2%
Nov 2013	8.7	22.1	91.0%	5.1	17.0	96.5%	5.7	19.2	94.0%
Dec 2013	8.3	21.9	91.5%	4.9	16.6	96.8%	6.3	19.9	93.6%
Jan 2014	9.4	23.3	90.4%	5.8	17.1	96.3%	6.2	19.8	93.5%
Feb 2014	9.5	23.4	89.9%	4.7	17.1	96.3%	5.4	19.7	93.4%
Mar 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%

Notes:

1. Median and 95th 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 95th 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 2014/15 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 26th working day after the end of the reporting month.

Eight Trusts did not submit data on incomplete RTT pathways for December 2014. 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 1st July 2014. 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 November 2014 may have been just under 3.2 million patients. The latest figures submitted by missing Trusts are shown in the table below.

Trust	Latest available incomplete RTT pathway data (rounded to nearest hundred)	Month incomplete pathway data last submitted
Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals	20,700	Nov-13

NHS Trust		
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
Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust	34,000	June-14
Medway NHS Foundation Trust	17,900	Nov-14
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust	28,800	June-14
The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust	10,200	June-14
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust	13,800	Feb-14

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

Additional Information

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

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