





Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics:

Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending December 2020





Reader Information

Purpose:	This statistical release presents information on waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland and reports on the performance of the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts against the 2020/21 Draft Ministerial waiting time target, which states that:
	"By March 2021, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment; with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks."
	This statistical release details information on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting, for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in HSC Trusts at 31st December 2020 (including patients waiting to be seen at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC)). It also includes activity for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during the quarter ending December 2020. Data are presented by HSC Trust, specialty and time band. Information on Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS) waiting times are available in the accompanying CSV file.
Statistical Quality:	The 'Outpatient Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation' booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from: <u>https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/outpatient-waiting-times-supporting-documentation.</u>
	Due to the redeployment of resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, the data contained within this publication has not been subject to the usual level of quality assurance; data related to the Southern HSC Trust is provisional and will be amended as necessary in future publications.
Internet:	https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times
Authors:	Jenny Finlay, Mary Farrelly, Siobhán Morgan
Publication Date:	Thursday 25 th February 2021
Reporting Period:	1 st October – 31st December 2020
lssued by:	Hospital Information Branch Information & Analysis Directorate Department of Health Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SQ
Contact Information and further copies:	statistics@health-ni.gov.uk
Target audience:	Department of Health (DoH), Chief Executives of the HSC Board and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, Health & Social Care stakeholders, academics, the media and the general public.

Price:	Free
Copyright:	This publication is Crown copyright and may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium. Any material used must be acknowledged, and the title of the publication specified.

Contents

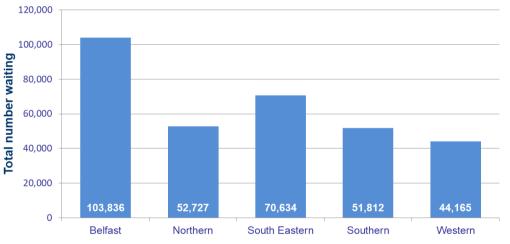
Total number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment	5
Patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment	6
Patients waiting longer than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment	7
Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre	8
Completed waits for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service	9
Appendix 1: Tables	10
Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes	14
Appendix 3: National Statistics	17

By March 2021, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks.



Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

At 31st December 2020, 323,174 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 1.2% (4,015) less than at 30th September 2020 (327,189) and 6.0% (18,157) more than at 31st December 2019 (305,017) (Table 1). This does not include patients waiting to be seen at a Day Case Procedure Centre.

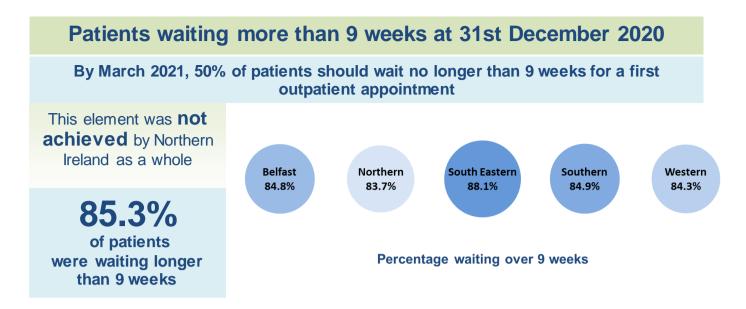


Almost a third (32.1%) of those waiting were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 21.9% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 16.3% in the Northern HSC Trust, 16.0% in the Southern HSC Trust and 13.7% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2b).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust, and instead are provided as centralised services for Northern Ireland. As patients are reported against the HSC Trust responsible for the service to which they have been referred, users should be cautious in how they use these data (see explanatory note 9).

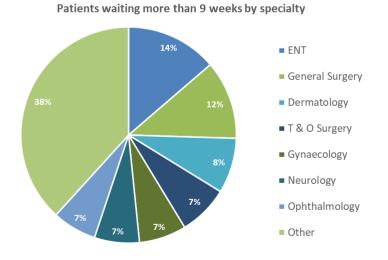
Of the 323,174 patients waiting, 61.0% (197,015) were waiting in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (41,578); General Surgery (39,202); Dermatology (26,371); Gynaecology (24,640); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery (24,117); Ophthalmology (21,141) and Neurology (19,966) (Table 3b).



Over four fifths (85.3%, 275,651) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 31st December 2020, compared with 84.9% (277,776) at 30th September 2020 and 78.4% (239,130) at 31st December 2019 (Table 1).

The 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2a). Data users should be aware that not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Almost nine out of ten (88.1%, 62,253) patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 9 weeks; 84.9% (43,978) in the Southern HSC Trust, 84.8% (88,087) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 84.3% (37,223) in the Western HSC Trust and 83.7% (44,110) in the Northern HSC Trust (Table 2a).



More than three-fifths (61.8%, 170,258) of the 275,651 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery: Dermatology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Neurology Gynaecology; and Ophthalmology (Table 3a).

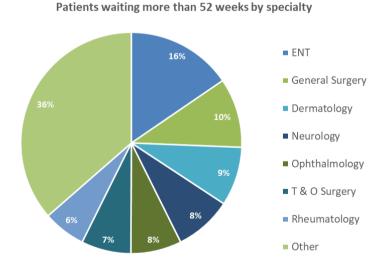
Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset



At 31st December 2020, 51.9% (167,806) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 47.5% (155,497) at 30th September 2020, and 36.7% (111,963) at 31st December 2019 (Table 1).

The 52 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2a). Data users should be aware that not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Over three fifths (62.6%, 44,201) of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks, 49.4% (21,834) in the Western HSC Trust, 49.0% (50,918) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 48.9% (25,328) in the Southern HSC Trust and 48.4% (25,525) in the Northern HSC Trust (Table 2a).



Almost two thirds (63.6%, 106,692) of the 167,806 patients waiting more than 52 weeks were in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Dermatology; Neurology; Ophthalmology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery and Rheumatology (Table 3a).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre

In October 2016 the then Health Minister launched 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together,' a strategy which underpins the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Programme for Government ambition to support people to lead long, healthy and active lives.

As part of this strategy, the Elective Care Plan was published in February 2017 which stated that 'Regional Elective Care Assessment and Treatment Centres will be established to deliver large volumes of assessments and non-complex routine surgery across a broad range of specialties.' In December 2018, prototype 'Day Case Procedure Centres' (DPCs) became operational for the surgical treatment of Cataracts and Varicose Veins for outpatients and day cases. Patients waiting for either of these procedures can now be referred to a DPC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.

DPCs have been set up in the following locations:

DPC	Location(s) of Centre				
	Mid Ulster Hospital (Northern HSC Trust)				
Cataracts	Downe Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust)				
	South Tyrone Hospital (Southern HSC Trust)				
Varicose Veins	Lagan Valley Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust)				
vancose veins	Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex (Western HSC Trust)				

Due to these changes in operational service delivery and concomitant changes in how Outpatient waiting times are recorded, the following data and information about DPC Waiting Lists is provisional and subject to revision.

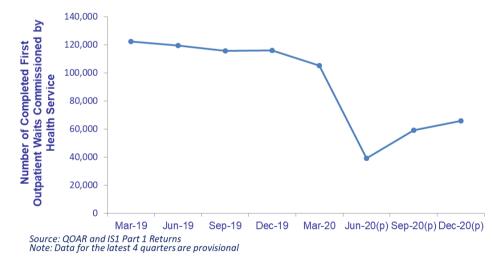
At 31st December 2020, 13,042 patients were waiting to be seen for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts DPC (Table 5a). The notable increase in patients waiting for an appointment at a DPC when compared with previous quarters is largely attributable to the recoding of information within hospital systems; a large number of patients formerly recorded under the Ophthalmology specialty are currently undergoing a validation exercise to correctly record their wait at a DPC instead. There were no outpatients waiting for varicose veins treatment at a DPC.



Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1Returns

Users should be aware that the COVID-19 Pandemic drastically altered the functions of hospitals during the current reporting period and should exercise caution when using these provisional data given that hospital records may not be fully updated at this time.

There were 64,658 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland, 10.3% (6,024) more than the number of attendances during the previous quarter (58,634), and 43.7% (50,159) less than the number of attendances during the quarter ending December 2019 (114,817). During the quarter ending December 2020, 161 patients attended their appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) (Table 4).



Within the Independent Sector, 1,236 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, double the figure during the quarter ending September 2020 (614), and 8.9% (101) more than in the same quarter last year (1,135) (Table 4).

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service within the Independent Sector (1,236) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals (64,658, and those attending a DPC (161), provisional figures indicate that 66,055 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by the Health Service. This is an increase of 11.4% (6,746) on the number seen during the quarter ending September 2020 (59,309), and 43.1% (50,052) less than during the quarter ending December 2019 (116,107 (Table 4)).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Quarterly	y outpatient waiting	lists = 31st	December 2020 ¹
Table 1. Qualteri	y outpatient waiting	11313 - 3131	December 2020

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (31st Dec 2020)		Same Quarter Last Year (31st Dec 2019)
Total Patients Waiting	323,174	327,189	305,017
Number waiting over 9 weeks	275,651	277,776	239,130
Percentage waiting over 9 weeks	85.3%	84.9%	78.4%
Number waiting over 52 weeks	167,806	155,497	111,963

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 2a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st December 2020¹

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting								
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	Total Waiting	
Belfast	11,474	4,275	3,661	3,560	2,634	27,314	50,918	103,836	
Northern	6,268	2,349	1,947	1,846	1,525	13,267	25,525	52,727	
South Eastern	6,413	1,968	1,790	1,614	1,408	13,240	44,201	70,634	
Southern	5,789	2,045	1,851	1,682	1,487	13,630	25,328	51,812	
Western	5,244	1,698	1,418	1,488	1,315	11,168	21,834	44,165	
Total	35,188	12,335	10,667	10,190	8,369	78,619	167,806	323,174	

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset ¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 2b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointmentby HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 31st December 20201

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting									
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52			
Belfast	11.1%	4.1%	3.5%	3.4%	2.5%	26.3%	49.0%			
Northern	11.9%	4.5%	3.7%	3.5%	2.9%	25.2%	48.4%			
South Eastern	9.1%	2.8%	2.5%	2.3%	2.0%	18.7%	62.6%			
Southern	11.2%	3.9%	3.6%	3.2%	2.9%	26.3%	48.9%			
Western	11.9%	3.8%	3.2%	3.4%	3.0%	25.3%	49.4%			
Total	10.9%	3.8%	3.3%	3.2%	2.6%	24.3%	51.9%			

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset ¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 3a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st December 2020¹

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting								
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	Waiting	
ENT	2,781	1,010	869	824	835	9,307	25,952	41,578	
General Surgery	5,052	1,688	1,552	1,448	1,254	11,155	17,053	39,202	
Dermatology	2,629	907	698	720	627	6,321	14,469	26,371	
Gynaecology	3,696	1,380	1,278	1,205	950	7,780	8,351	24,640	
T & O Surgery	2,510	881	739	750	647	6,385	12,205	24,117	
Ophthalmology	2,069	789	685	652	520	3,971	12,455	21,141	
Neurology	985	380	366	345	264	3,536	14,090	19,966	
Rheumatology	977	425	425	385	284	3,039	10,468	16,003	
Paediatrics	2,447	946	744	729	545	4,364	5,516	15,291	
Gastroenterology	2,065	680	540	513	393	3,079	6,915	14,185	
Oral Surgery	594	202	191	221	187	1,926	9,532	12,853	
General Medicine	1,162	345	313	314	272	2,277	6,210	10,893	
Urology	1,348	334	285	249	202	2,226	5,480	10,124	
Thoracic Medicine	874	372	351	311	254	2,599	5,179	9,940	
Cardiology	1,678	576	504	409	337	3,432	2,921	9,857	
Pain Management	552	216	238	221	131	1,802	5,057	8,217	
Plastic Surgery	501	170	149	167	144	1,087	2,573	4,791	
Geriatric Medicine	478	123	92	102	75	337	456	1,663	
Restorative Dentistry	86	55	43	40	17	577	723	1,541	
Other	2,704	856	605	585	431	3,419	2,201	10,801	
All Specialties	35,188	12,335	10,667	10,190	8,369	78,619	167,806	323,174	

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 3b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 31st December 2020¹

	· · ·								
Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting								
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52		
ENT	6.7%	2.4%	2.1%	2.0%	2.0%	22.4%	62.4%		
General Surgery	12.9%	4.3%	4.0%	3.7%	3.2%	28.5%	43.5%		
Dermatology	10.0%	3.4%	2.6%	2.7%	2.4%	24.0%	54.9%		
Gynaecology	15.0%	5.6%	5.2%	4.9%	3.9%	31.6%	33.9%		
T & O Surgery	10.4%	3.7%	3.1%	3.1%	2.7%	26.5%	50.6%		
Ophthalmology	9.8%	3.7%	3.2%	3.1%	2.5%	18.8%	58.9%		
Neurology	4.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%	1.3%	17.7%	70.6%		
Rheumatology	6.1%	2.7%	2.7%	2.4%	1.8%	19.0%	65.4%		
Paediatrics	16.0%	6.2%	4.9%	4.8%	3.6%	28.5%	36.1%		
Gastroenterology	14.6%	4.8%	3.8%	3.6%	2.8%	21.7%	48.7%		
Oral Surgery	4.6%	1.6%	1.5%	1.7%	1.5%	15.0%	74.2%		
General Medicine	10.7%	3.2%	2.9%	2.9%	2.5%	20.9%	57.0%		
Urology	13.3%	3.3%	2.8%	2.5%	2.0%	22.0%	54.1%		
Thoracic Medicine	8.8%	3.7%	3.5%	3.1%	2.6%	26.1%	52.1%		
Cardiology	17.0%	5.8%	5.1%	4.1%	3.4%	34.8%	29.6%		
Pain Management	6.7%	2.6%	2.9%	2.7%	1.6%	21.9%	61.5%		
Plastic Surgery	10.5%	3.5%	3.1%	3.5%	3.0%	22.7%	53.7%		
Geriatric Medicine	28.7%	7.4%	5.5%	6.1%	4.5%	20.3%	27.4%		
Restorative Dentistry	5.6%	3.6%	2.8%	2.6%	1.1%	37.4%	46.9%		
Other	25.0%	7.9%	5.6%	5.4%	4.0%	31.7%	20.4%		
All Specialties	10.9%	3.8%	3.3%	3.2%	2.6%	24.3%	51.9%		

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset ¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 4: Number of completed waits for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service: QE December 2018 - QE December 2020²

	Number of Completed First Outpatient Waits							
Quarter Ending	Ending Within Health Service Hospitals		Independent Sector*	Total Commissioned by Health Service				
Dec-18	124,530	0	2,442	126,972				
Mar-19	119,502	45	2,766	122,313				
Jun-19	117,985	106	1,579	119,670				
Sep-19	114,423	109	1,168	115,700				
Dec-19	114,817	155	1,135	116,107				
Mar-20	102,572	181	2,515	105,268				
Jun-20(p)	39,056	0	297	39,353				
Sep-20(p)	58,634	61	614	59,309				
Dec-20(p)	64,658	161	1,236	66,055				

Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

(p) Data are currently provisional

* Not National Statistics

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4 & 11–14

Table 5a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts Day Case Procedure Centre, by weeks waiting, 31st December 2020

Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks								
Specialty	Specialty waiting 0-6 >6-9 >9-12 >12-15 >15-18 >18-52 >52					Total Waiting		
Ophthalmology	667	335	359	414	420	2,727	8,120	13,042

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Not National Statistics

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

- The sources for the data contained in this release are the DoH CH3, CH3-R, QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns and the DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset. These returns collect information from Health and Social Care Trusts on a quarterly basis.
- The 'Outpatient Waiting Times Publication Supporting Documentation' booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from: <u>https://www.healthni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times</u>.
- 3. All of the data contained in the tables are available on a quarterly basis and can be supplied by individual specialty or Provider HSC Trust if this level of detail is required. In addition, quarterly data relating to waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment have been published in spreadsheet format (CSV), split by HSC Trust, Specialty and Programme of Care, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-December-2020.
- 4. Information includes patients living outside Northern Ireland and privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
- 5. Outpatient waiters are defined as patients still waiting for their first outpatient appointment at the end of the quarter, including those who have cancelled or missed a previous appointment. An outpatient appointment is to enable a patient to see a consultant, a member of their team or locum for such a member, in respect of one referral. Waiting time for a first outpatient appointment begins on the date the HSC Trust receives a referral for a first outpatient appointment and ends on the date a patient attends a first outpatient appointment. Patients who cannot attend (CNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date they informed the HSC Trust they could not attend, while patients who do not attend (DNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date of their box.
- 6. From 1st April 2014, Oral Surgery services undertaken by consultants contracted to the South Eastern HSC Trust were centralised, meaning that records for patients waiting for this service in both the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts are now held and managed in the South Eastern HSC Trust.
- 7. Each outpatient waiting time band relates to the number of completed weeks a patient has been waiting for outpatient assessment. For example, a patient waiting exactly 6 weeks would be

included in the 0-6 week time band and a patient waiting 6 weeks and 1 day would be included in the >6-9 (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) time band. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as set out in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction states that by March 2021, 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.

- 8. Some people will be waiting on more than one waiting list or be on the waiting list for more than one outpatient appointment/admission/diagnostic test at the same time due to having more than one condition.
- 9. A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust or at each of the five HSC Trusts, and instead are provided as centralised services for Northern Ireland. In such circumstances, patients from one HSC Trust area will be waiting to be seen at a service provided at another HSC Trust. In some cases a consultant from one HSC Trust may provide a 'visiting' service at another HSC Trust, and so the patient may not be reported at the HSC Trust at which they attend. Users should therefore be cautious in how they use these data. For example, they should not be used to calculate the total number of patients waiting per head of the population residing within each Trust area, as HSC Trusts that provide services for the whole of Northern Ireland will have a higher number of patients waiting per head of the population than those that provide more localised services. Neither should the actual number of patients waiting longer than the recommended waiting time be used as indicator of poor performance within an individual HSC Trust. Users who require an indication of the latter are advised to refer to the commentary section of the publication which provides an indication of the percentage of total waiters that have been waiting over the maximum recommended waiting times, within each HSC Trust
- 10. In February 2019, prototype 'Day Case Procedure Centres' (DPCs) became operational for the surgical outpatient treatment of Cataracts. Patients waiting for this procedure can now be referred to a DPC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.
- 11. The total number of completed outpatient waits each quarter, within HSC hospitals, is derived as the total number of attendances at a first outpatient appointment from the Departmental Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR) and the Regional Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (R-QOAR).
- 12. The number of patients who received an outpatient assessment, commissioned by the Health Service, in the Independent Sector is collected on the IS1 Part 1 Return. These figures are provided by the HSC Board. They are published for each transferring Health and Social Care

Trust (Trust responsible for the patient's waiting time). They are not National Statistics and they have not been validated by the Department; however, they have been included to provide users with a comprehensive view of completed outpatient waits during each quarter.

- 13. HIB surveyed data providers during 2011/12 to ascertain the cost of producing, validating and submitting the information required for this publication. This relates to the time taken to generate, validate and submit data, over and above what is already required by their organisation for internal performance management purposes. The cost to data providers of compliance within HIB's requirements for this publication, based on HSC salary costs, was £3,110.
- 14. Figures relating to outpatient waiting times for the quarter ending 31st March 2021 will be released on Thursday 27th May 2021.

Appendix 3: National Statistics

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The statistics last underwent a full assessment against the Code of Practice in 2011: <u>https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-</u> <u>assessmentreport153statisticsonhospitalwaitingtimesinnorthernirelan_tcm97-41176.pdf</u>.

Designation was awarded in September 2013: <u>https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-</u> letterofconfirmationasnationalstatisticsassessmentreport15_tcm97-42663.pdf.

Since the assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Further information on Outpatient Waiting Times in Northern Ireland is available from:

Hospital Information Branch Information & Analysis Directorate Department of Health Stormont Estate Belfast, BT4 3SQ

Email: <u>statistics@health-ni.gov.uk</u>

This Statistical bulletin and others published by Hospital Information Branch are available to download from the DoH Internet site at:

https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research