



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# NHS activity and performance summary: March and April 2023

Report summarising data on activity and performance in the Welsh NHS for March and April 2023.

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# Introduction

In light of the impact COVID-19 has had on NHS activity and performance levels, the Welsh Government has published its [programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales](#). This plan sets out a number of key ambitions to reduce waiting times for people in Wales. We have incorporated performance measures against these ambitions into this statistical release and on StatsWales.

Data provided in this statistical report has been provided by Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) unless stated otherwise. Data for each topic area are also available in more detail on our [StatsWales](#) website.

## Main points

In April, 82,551 calls were made to the 111 helpline service, an increase of over 4,000 calls compared to the previous month. Of these, over 69,000 calls were answered (84%). There were also over 377,600 hits on the [NHS 111 Wales website](#) and almost 12,000 completed [symptom checks \(NHS 111 Wales\)](#).

In April there were 3,799 red (life threatening) calls to the ambulance service, 11.4% of all calls. An average of 127 immediately life-threatening calls were made each day, 2 fewer than in March.

53.0% of red calls received an emergency response within eight minutes. This was 5.6 percentage points higher than in March and 1.9 percentage points higher than in April 2022 and the best for almost a year (May 2022). Data for red calls are only comparable from May 2019 onwards.

There was an average of 2,903 daily attendances to emergency departments,

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an increase compared to the previous month. Performance increased slightly against the four hour and twelve hour targets. The average (median) time spent in emergency departments was 3 minute shorter in April compared to the previous month at two hours and forty one minutes.

The pandemic has caused a large increase in patient pathways waiting to start treatment. In March the number increased from around 731,000 to around 734,700, the first increase after falling for five months. The number of patient pathways is not the same as the number of individual patients, because some people have multiple open pathways. More information is available in the Welsh Government's [Chief Statistician's blog](#).

New management information suggests that in March, when there were about 734,700 open patient pathways, there were about 576,000 individual patients on treatment waiting lists in Wales. After falling for five consecutive months, this was an increase of over 2,000 patients from February.

The proportion of patient pathways waiting less than 26 weeks increased to 58.5% in March. This has been relatively stable for some time after falling significantly from the levels pre-pandemic. The number of pathways waiting longer than 36 weeks decreased for the seventh consecutive month in March, to just under 228,000, the lowest since April 2021 but remaining high in historical context.

About 31,700 pathways were waiting more than two years, 55% lower than the peak and falling for a year after a consistent increase throughout 2021. The average (median) time patient pathways had been waiting for treatment at the end of March decreased on the previous month to 20.0 weeks.

The [planned care recovery plan](#) established a target to eliminate two year waits in most specialties by March 2023, with 'most' referring to all specialties [excluding seven recognised as exceptionally challenging](#) even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The target was not met as in March there were a further

17 specialties with pathways waiting more than two years accounting for 4,300 pathways. The seven specialties outside the scope of this target account for the remaining 27,400 pathways waiting more than two years.

Headline measures for open pathways across the UK are not comparable. There are large differences between Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland statistics, meaning they should not be compared at all. With England, current understanding suggests a broadly comparable number can be produced for Wales by removing some known non-consultant led pathways which are not counted in England. On that basis, there are around 654,000 open pathways on consultant-led pathways in Wales, equivalent to one pathway (not patient) for every 4.8 people. For England, the figure in March was one pathway for every 7.7 people.

The number of pathways waiting longer than one year for their first outpatient appointment decreased to around 53,000. The planned care recovery target has not been met, despite a reduction of 48% from the peak reached in August 2022.

For diagnostic services, the number of patient pathways waiting increased to about 116,300 in March. The number of patient pathways waiting longer than eight weeks (the target maximum wait) increased to around 43,300, in March.

For therapies, the number of patient pathways waiting increased to just over 62,700 in March and remains high in historical context. The number waiting longer than fourteen weeks (the target maximum wait) decreased to just over 7,000, falling for a year and a 51.6% fall from the peak in March 2022.

For cancer services, more people started their first definitive treatment in March (1,761) than the previous month. The number of pathways closed following the patient being informed they did not have cancer increased from the previous month to 14,230. Performance increased against the 62 day target in March to 55.3% compared to 52.5% the previous month, which was the second lowest on

record.

## Unscheduled care

New data relating to unscheduled care are provided for the month of April 2023.

### Calls to 111 service

As of 16 March 2022, the non-emergency 111 helpline service has been rolled out across the whole of Wales.

In April, a total of 82,551 calls were made to the 111 helpline service, an increase of over 4,000 calls compared to the previous month. Of these, over 69,000 (84%) calls were answered by the 111 service in Wales, an average of over 2,300 calls per day.

An estimated 13,377 (16%) calls were ended by the caller before being answered. Of these, 4,153 were ended within 60 seconds of the automated messages, suggesting their needs were likely to have been met.

Over 9,200 calls were abandoned after 60 seconds and these are regarded as callers who were more likely to have still required the service after the messages but were unable to get through or decided not to wait. This number has fallen back to levels of prior months after a peak in December 2022.

Of the calls answered, 1,479 calls indicated that they wished to conduct the call in Welsh.

There were over 377,600 hits on the [NHS 111 Wales website](#) and almost 12,000 completed [symptom checks \(NHS 111 Wales\)](#) in April.

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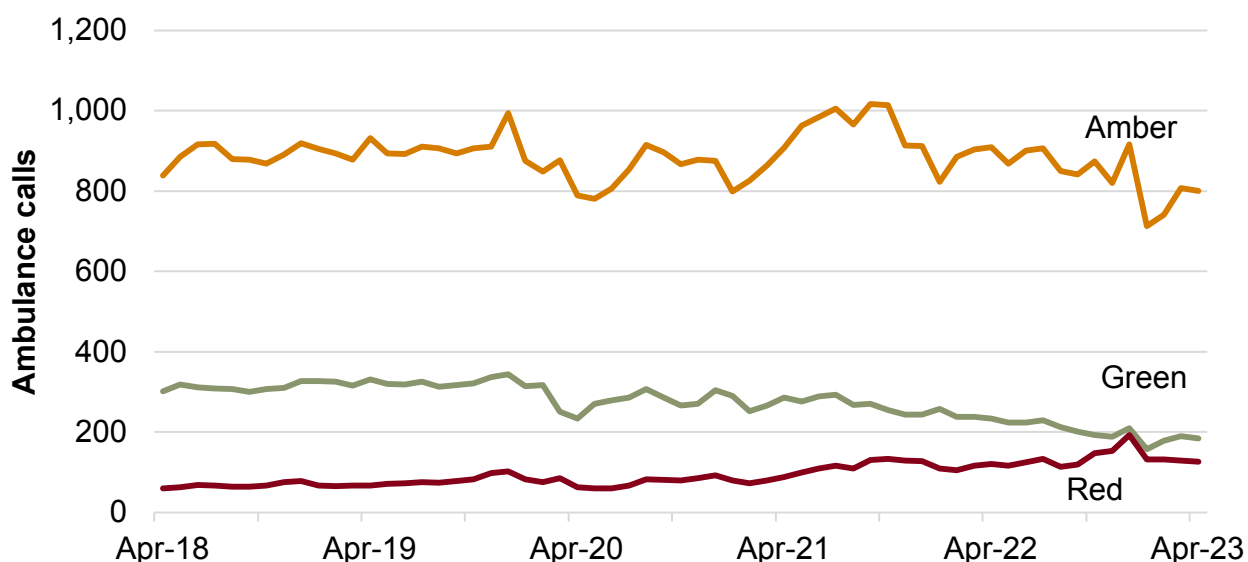
More data is published on [StatsWales](#).

## Emergency calls to the ambulance service

A wider range of ambulance quality indicators are published on the [Emergency Ambulance Services Committee \(EASC\) website](#) and on [StatsWales](#).

### Activity

**Figure 1: Average daily emergency ambulance calls, by call type and month, April 2018 to April 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 1: A line chart showing the number of emergency calls received by the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust. An Amber call is the most common call and the number of red calls is showing a slight upward trend over the years.

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Source: Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

## Emergency ambulance calls and responses to red calls, by local health board and month on StatsWales

[Note 1] An update to call handling in May 2019 resulted in a change to red incident volume. It is not possible to directly compare before and after this date. Further details are available in the [quality information](#).

In April, over 33,300 emergency calls were made to the ambulance service. This was an average of 1,111 calls per day, a decrease of 16 (1.4%) calls on average per day compared with the previous month and 151 (12.0%) fewer per day than the same month last year.

Calls to the ambulance service are categorised as red (immediately life-threatening), amber (serious but not life-threatening) or green (non-urgent). An average of 127 red calls were made per day in April, 2 fewer compared with the previous month but still high in historical context.

In April, the proportion of all calls that were immediately life-threatening was 11.4%, down from 11.5% in March but remaining high in historical context.

### Performance

#### Target

- 65% of red calls (immediately life-threatening, someone is in imminent danger of death, such as a cardiac arrest) to have a response within 8 minutes.

### Figure 2: Percentage of red calls which received an emergency response at

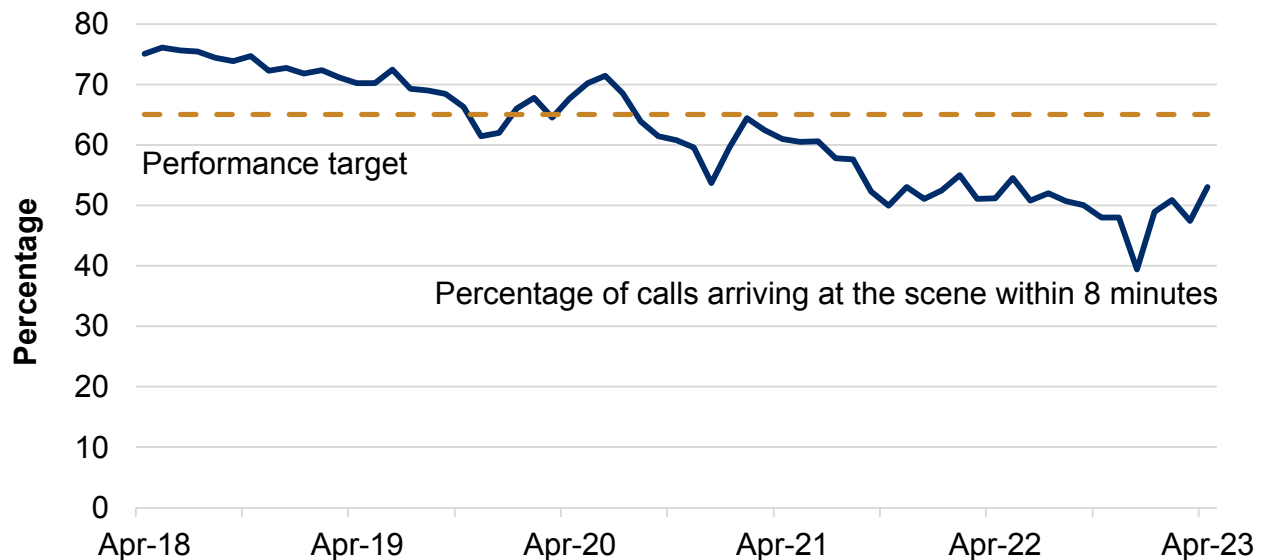
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## the scene within 8 minutes, April 2018 to April 2023 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 2: A line chart showing that performance for emergency response calls trended downwards over the long-term. In recent months the performance has increased, but remains below the target of 65%.

Source: Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

### Emergency responses: minute-by-minute performance for red calls by local health board and month on StatsWales

[Note 1]: An update to call handling in May 2019 resulted in a change to red incident volume. It is not possible to directly compare before and after this date. Further details are available in the [quality information](#).

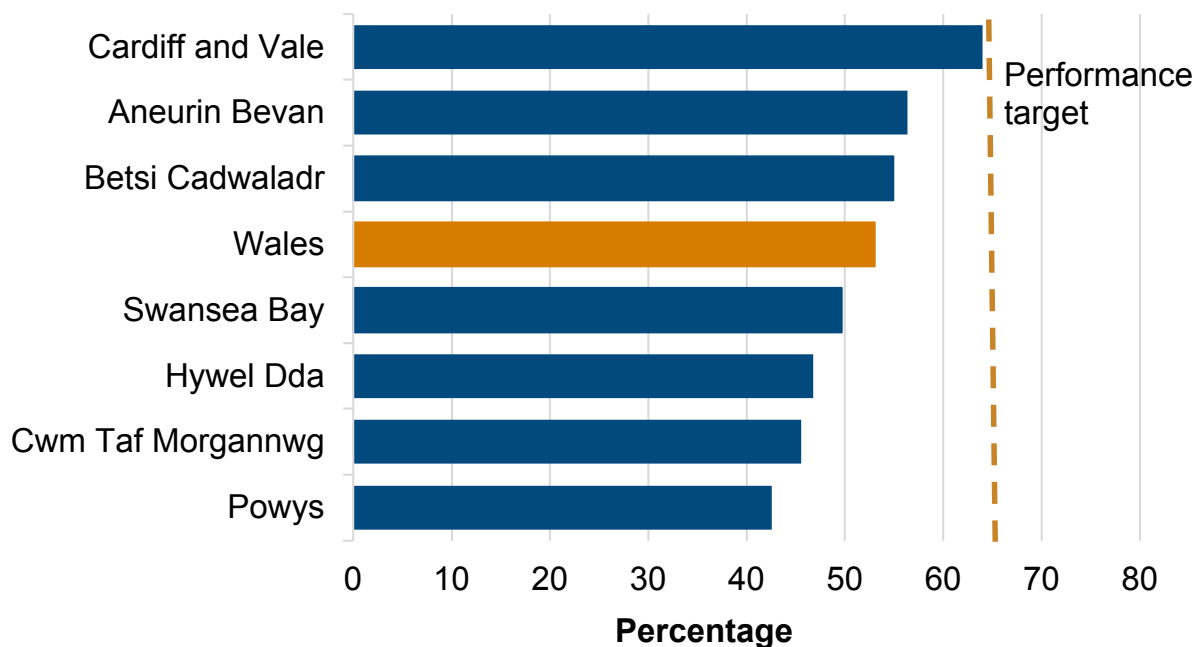
## Figure 3: Percentage of red calls which received an emergency response at the scene within 8 minutes, by

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## Local Health Board, April 2023



Description of Figure 3: A bar chart showing that performance was below the target level for emergency response calls in all Local Health Boards, though in Cardiff and Vale performance was close to the target of 65%.

Source: Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

### Emergency responses: minute-by-minute performance for red calls by local health board and month on StatsWales

In April, 53.0% of emergency responses to immediately life threatening (red) calls arrived within 8 minutes of patient location and chief complaint being established. This was 5.6 percentage points higher than the previous month and 1.9 percentage points higher than in April 2022 and the highest since May 2022.

In recent years the proportion of red calls responded to within 8 minutes has

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fallen fairly consistently. It is important to note that over the same period there has been a significant increase in the volume of red calls received. In 2022 around 70% more red calls were received than in 2020 and 2019. At a Local Health Board level, the highest proportion of red calls responded to within 8 minutes was seen in Cardiff and Vale (64.0%), and the lowest in Powys (42.6%).

The median response time in the four years prior to the pandemic ranged between 4 minutes 30 seconds and 6 minutes for red calls. In April, the average (median) response time to immediately life-threatening 'red' calls was 7 minutes 36 seconds. This was 48 seconds quicker than previous month and 13 seconds quicker than April 2022

The majority of calls to the ambulance service are categorised as 'amber' calls, for which there is no performance target for call response times. In April, the median response time for amber calls was 1 hour 3 minutes and 32 seconds. This was over 37 minutes quicker than in March and almost 44 minutes quicker than in April 2022.

## **Emergency department attendances and admissions to hospital**

A wider range of emergency department performance statistics are published on the [National Collaborative Commissioning Unit \(NCCU\) website](#), as management information.

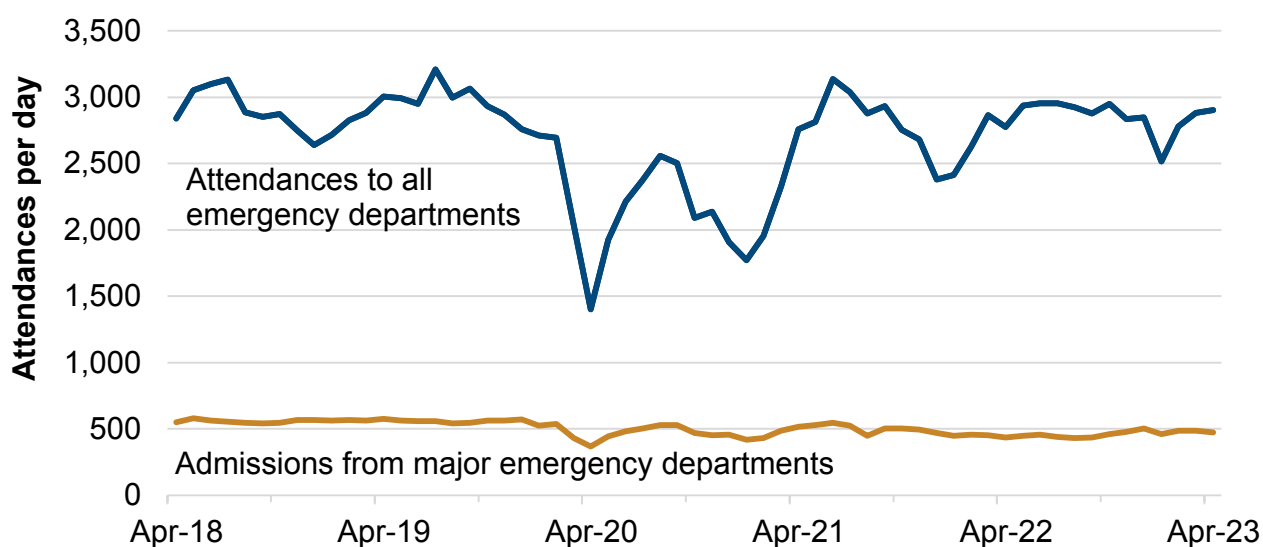
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## Activity

**Figure 4: Average attendances in emergency departments, and admissions to hospital resulting from attendances at major emergency departments per day, April 2018 to April 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 4: A line chart showing attendances to emergency department, which are generally higher in the summer months than the winter, but otherwise remain relatively stable. There was a decrease in attendances due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Emergency department data set, Digital Health and Care Wales

### Number of attendances in NHS Wales emergency departments by age band, sex and site on StatsWales

[Note 1]: Chart shows number of attendances at both major emergency departments and minor injuries units, and the number of admissions resulting

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from attending major emergency departments only.

In April there were about 87,100 attendances to all emergency departments. This was an average of 2,903 emergency department attendances per day; 24 attendances more per day on average than in the previous month and 129 more than April 2022.

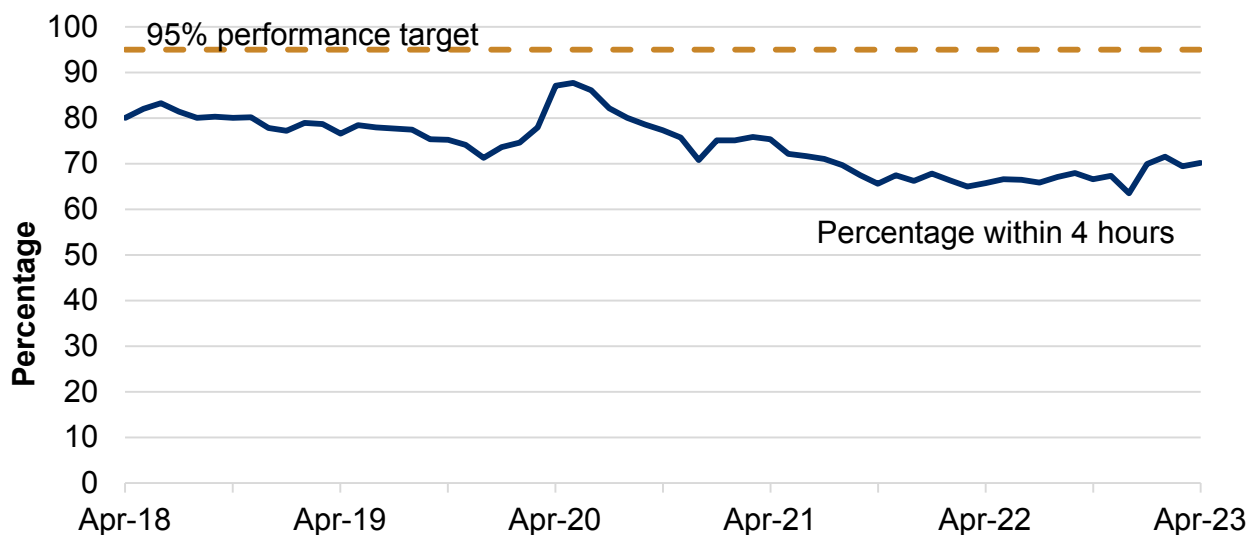
In April, over 14,200 patients were admitted to the same or a different hospital following attendance at a major emergency department. This was 5.5% lower than the previous month, but 9.6% higher than the same month in 2022.

## Performance

### Targets

- 95% of new patients should spend less than 4 hours in emergency departments from arrival until admission, transfer or discharge.
- No patient waiting more than 12 hours in emergency departments from arrival until admission, transfer or discharge.

**Figure 5: Percentage of patients admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours at emergency departments, April 2018 to April 2023**



Description of Figure 5: A line chart showing the percentage of patients admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours at emergency departments fell during the coronavirus pandemic and has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Source: Emergency department data set, Digital Health and Care Wales

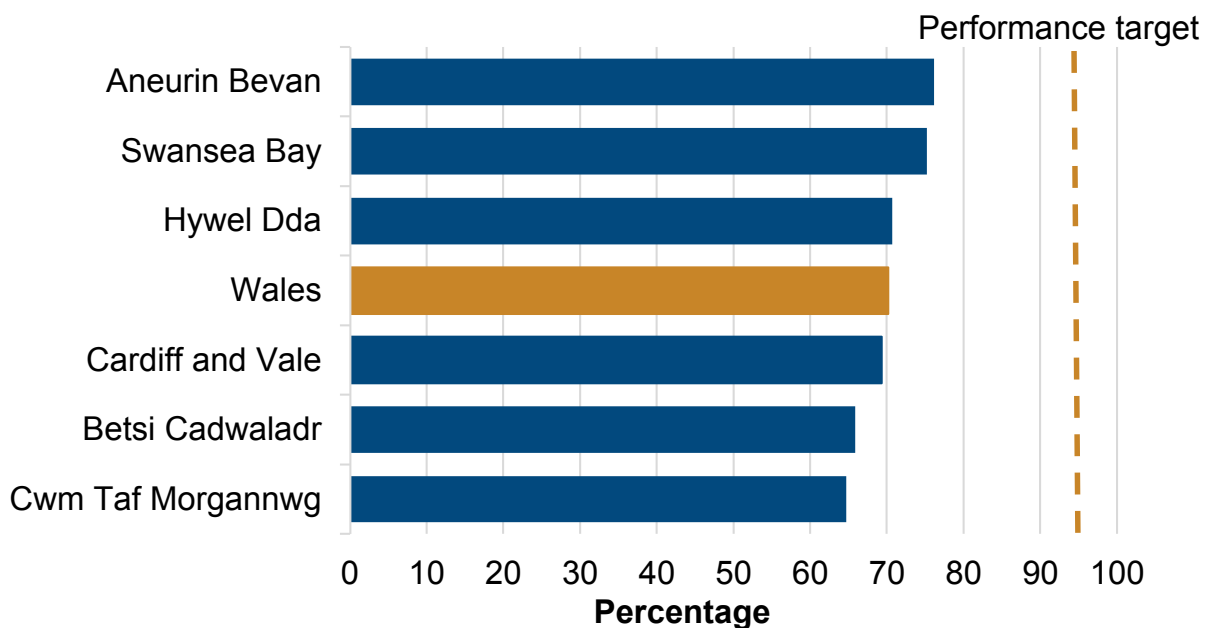
### **Performance against 4 hour target by hospital on StatsWales**

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**Figure 6: Percentage of patients admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours at emergency departments, by Local Health Board, April 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 6: Bar chart showing performance was below the 4 hour performance target for emergency departments in all Local Health Boards.

Source: Emergency department data set, Digital Health and Care Wales

### Performance against 4 hour target by hospital on StatsWales

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this figure because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys is made available in previous StatsWales link.

In April, 70.2% of patients in all NHS emergency departments spent less than 4

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hours in the department from arrival until admission, transfer or discharge. This was 0.7 percentage points higher than the previous month, remaining low in historical context. Aneurin Bevan health board saw the highest proportion spending less than 4 hours in emergency departments (76.2%), and Cwm Taf Morgannwg saw the lowest (64.7%).

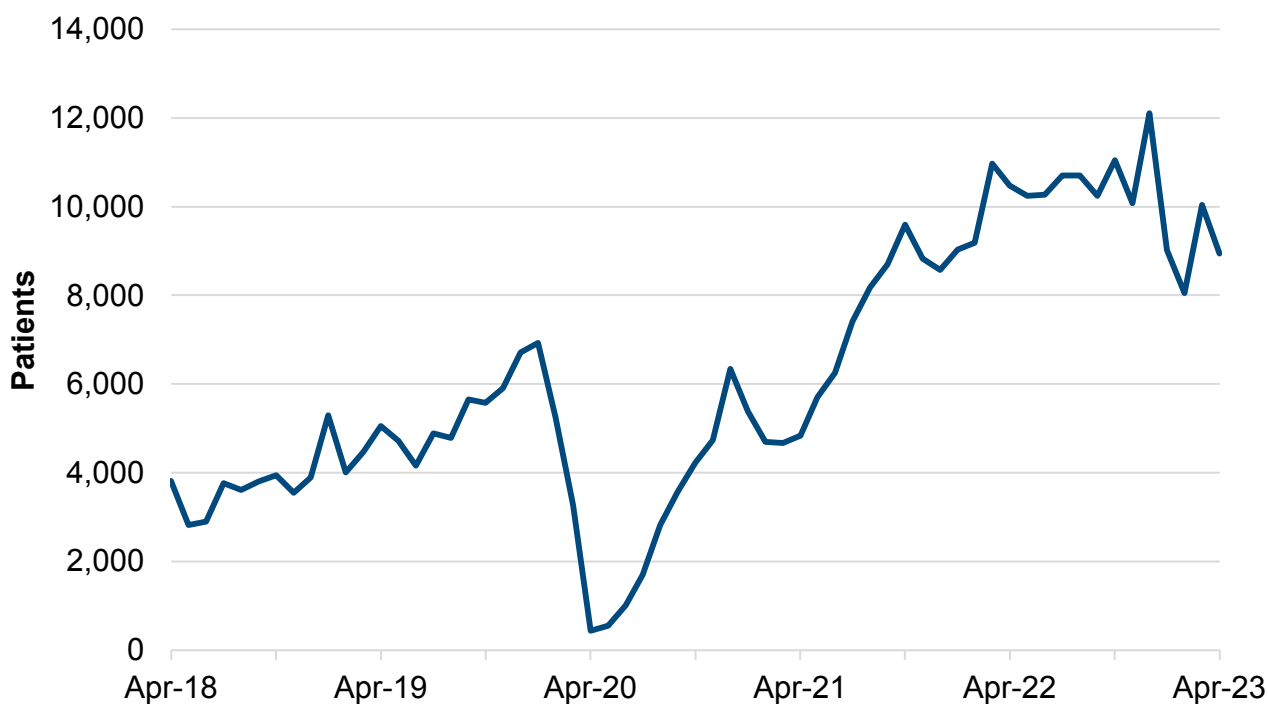
In 2019, the median time patients spent in emergency departments was around 2 hours and 30 minutes. During the early part of the pandemic, as attendances decreased the median time spent in the department decreased, to a low of 1 hour 47 minutes in April 2020. Since then, median times increased and reached a record high of 3 hours and 8 minutes in March 2022. In the latest data for April, the median waiting time was 2 hours and 38 minutes, just over 3 minutes quicker than the previous month.

The median time spent in emergency department varies by age. Prior to the pandemic, children (aged 0 to 4) spent between 1 hour and 30 minutes and 2 hours in emergency departments, while older patients (aged 85 or greater) spent between 3 hours and 30 minutes and 5 hours.

In April, children (aged 0 to 4) spent an average of 2 hours and 1 minute in emergency departments. Adults aged 85 and over spent an average of 5 hours and 9 minutes in emergency departments.



**Figure 7: Patients waiting more than 12 hours to be admitted, transferred or discharged at NHS emergency departments, April 2018 to April 2023**



Description of Figure 7: A line chart showing the number of patients waiting longer than 12 hours to be admitted, transferred or discharged at emergency departments, which fell sharply during the initial coronavirus period but has otherwise trended upwards over the long term.

Source: Emergency department data set, Digital Health and Care Wales

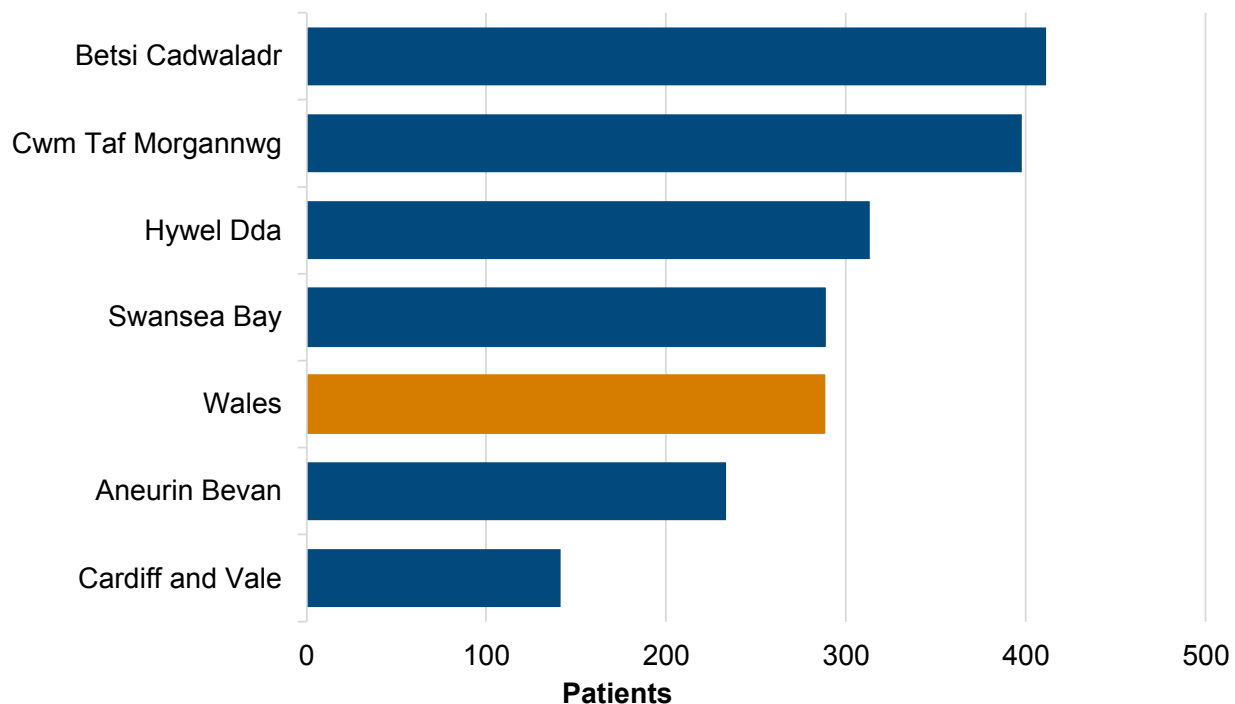
### Performance against the 12 hour target by hospital on StatsWales

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**Figure 8: Patients waiting more than 12 hours to be admitted, transferred or discharged at NHS emergency departments, per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, April 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 8: Bar chart showing in all Local Health Boards there were patients who waited longer than 12 hours.

Source: Emergency department data set, Digital Health and Care Wales

### **Performance against the 12 hour target by hospital on StatsWales**

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this figure because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys is made

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available in previous StatsWales link.

In April 8,945 patients waited 12 hours or more. This was 1,090 (10.9%) fewer than in the previous month. Adjusted by population, more patients waited longer than 12 hours in Betsi Cadwaladr (411) than in any other Local Health Board. The lowest figure was in Cardiff and Vale (141).

## Scheduled care activity

New data relating to unscheduled care are provided for the month of March 2023.

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# Outpatient referrals and appointments

## Activity

**Figure 9: Average daily referrals for first outpatient appointment, March 2018 to March 2023**



Description of Figure 9: A line chart showing outpatient referrals, which has been fluctuating with an upwards trend. Following a big drop in referrals in February 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, outpatient referrals have steadily risen back to pre-pandemic levels.

Source: Outpatient Referral Dataset, Digital Health and Care Wales

## Referrals by local health board and month on StatsWales

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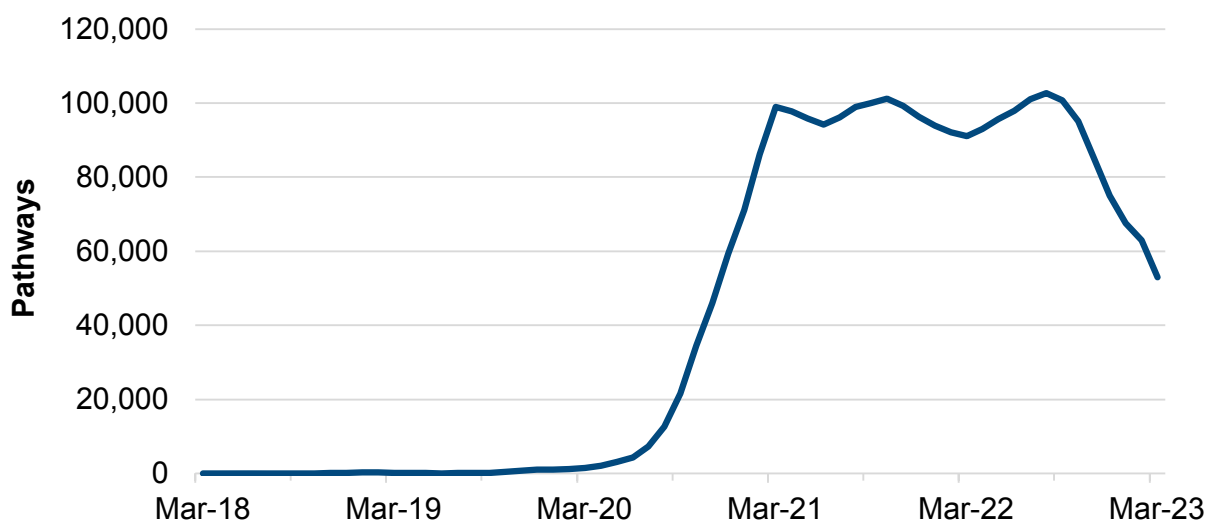
An average of 4,328 referrals for first outpatient appointments were made per day in March 2023. This is an increase of 1.7% (71 more referrals per day on average) compared to February 2023 and 13.8% compared to March 2022.

## Performance

### Targets

- No one waiting for longer than a year for their first outpatient appointment by the end of 2022 (a target established in the [planned care recovery plan](#)).

**Figure 10: Pathways waiting more than a year for their first appointment, March 2018 to March 2023**



Description of Figure 10: A line chart showing the number of patient pathways waiting longer than a year, which rapidly increased during the coronavirus

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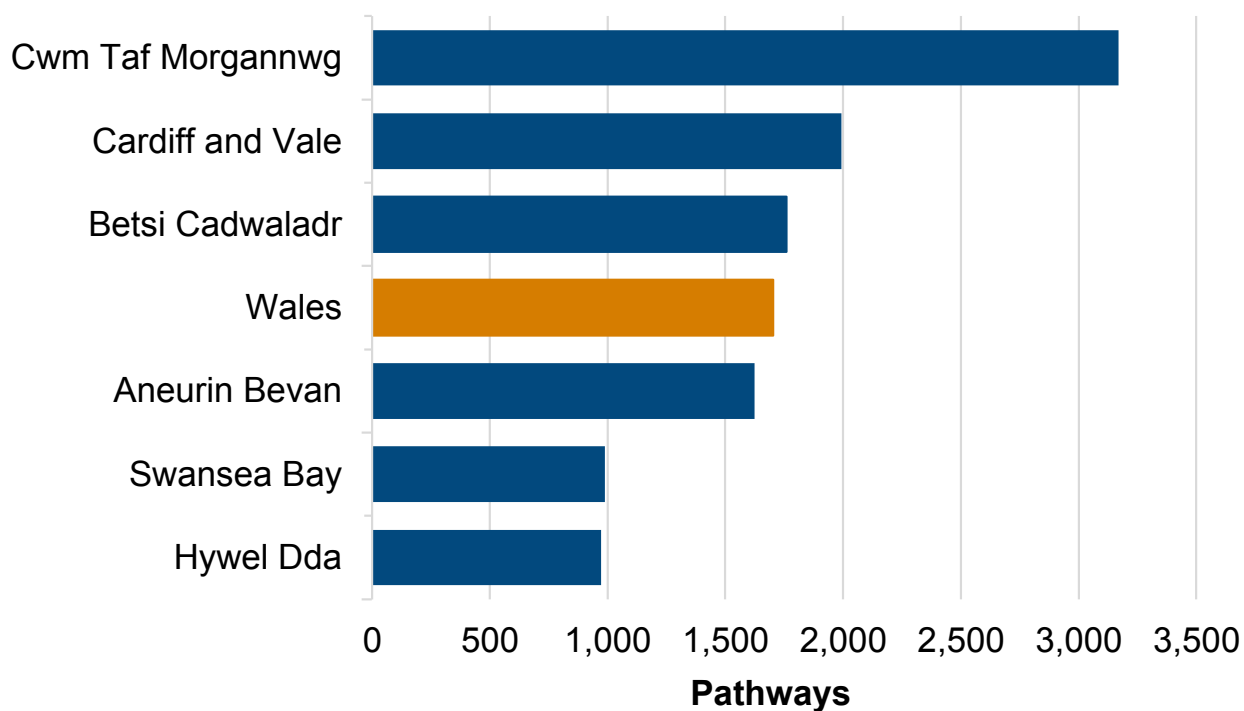
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pandemic but has been coming down in recent months.

Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

### COVID-19 recovery plan, ambitions for referral to treatment waiting times on StatsWales

**Figure 11: Pathways waiting more than a year for their first appointment per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, March 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 11: A bar chart showing the number of patient pathways waiting longer than a year for a first outpatient appointment, adjusted by population size, was highest in Cwm Taf Morgannwg and lowest in Hywel Dda.

Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

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## COVID-19 recovery plan, ambitions for referral to treatment waiting times on StatsWales

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this figure because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys is made available in previous StatsWales link.

In March, the number of pathways waiting longer than one year for their first outpatient appointment decreased by 16.0% compared to the previous month to around 53,000, the seventh consecutive monthly fall and the lowest number since November 2020. The planned care recovery plan target has not been met, though has fallen by 48% from the peak reached in August 2022.

Among the Local Health Boards, the highest number of pathways waiting more than one year per 100,000 of the population was in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (3,170) and the lowest in Hywel Dda (971).

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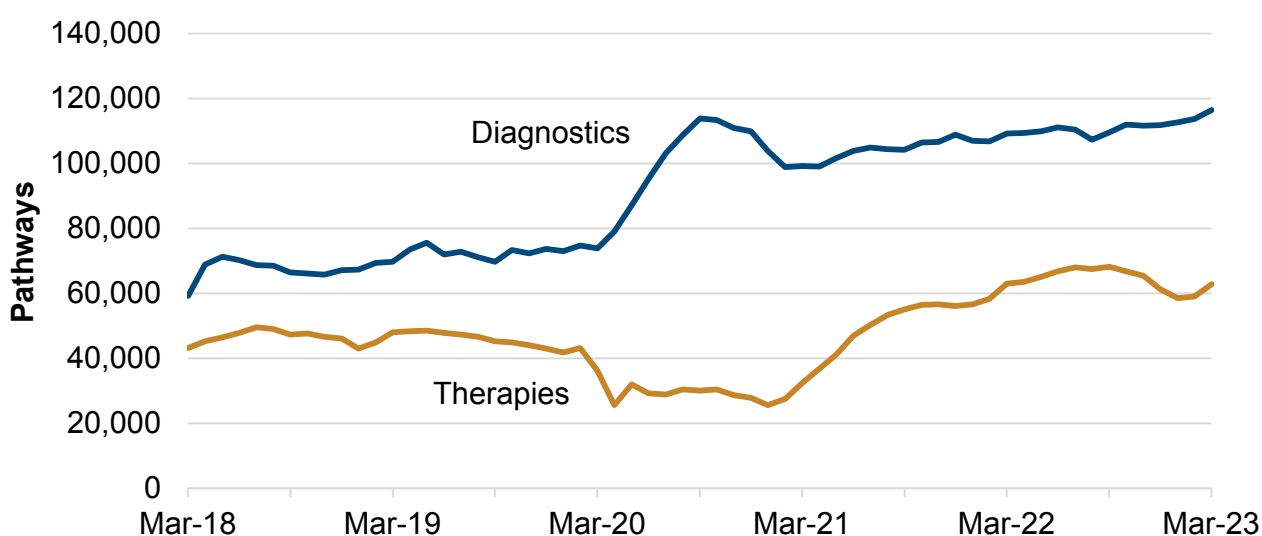
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# Diagnostic and therapy waiting times

## Activity

**Figure 12: Patient pathways waiting for diagnostic and therapy services, March 2018 to March 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 12: A line chart showing a long term upward trend in patients waiting for diagnostic services, including a sharp increase in the start of the coronavirus pandemic and the number of patient pathways waiting for therapy services which has been increasing throughout of 2021, but reached a plateau in recent month.

Source: Diagnostic and therapy services waiting times, Digital Health and Care Wales

[Diagnostic and Therapy Services Waiting Times by week on StatsWales](#)

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[Note 1]: The low point in April 2020 for therapies is in part due to Betsi Cadwaladr not submitting data for this month, please see the key quality information for more information.

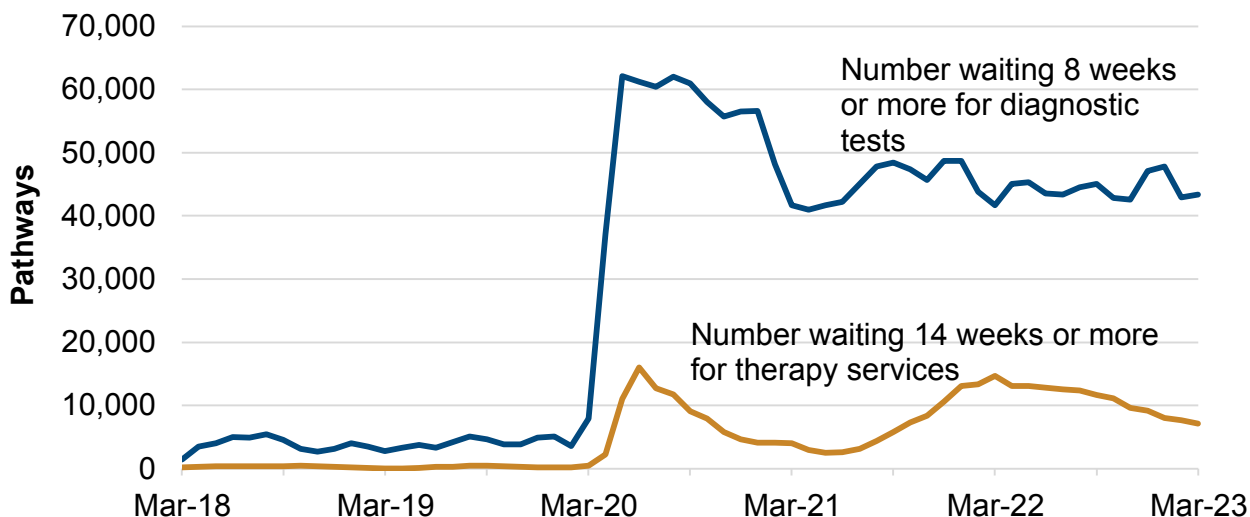
In March there were around 116,300 patient pathways waiting for diagnostics, an increase of 2.4% compared with the previous month. There were around 62,700 patient pathways waiting for therapies, an increase of 6.2% compared to the previous month and remaining high in historical context.

## Performance

### Targets

- The maximum wait for access to specified diagnostic tests is 8 weeks.
- The maximum wait for access to specified therapy services is 14 weeks.
- The **planned care recovery plan** established a target date of Spring 2024 to reach these targets.

**Figure 13: Patient pathways waiting over the target time for diagnostic and therapy services, March 2018 to March 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 13: Line chart showing a big increase in patients waiting longer than 8 weeks for diagnostic services at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the number of pathways waiting has fallen throughout 2020 but has been fluctuating since, and the number of patient pathways waiting longer than 14 weeks for therapy services peaking in June 2020 and March 2022, but has been falling since, but neither are close to pre-pandemic levels.

Source: Diagnostic and therapy services waiting times, Digital Health and Care Wales

### Diagnostic and Therapy Services Waiting Times by week on StatsWales

[Note 1]: Betsi Cadwaladr did not submit data for April 2020, so are not included in the Wales figures for this month.

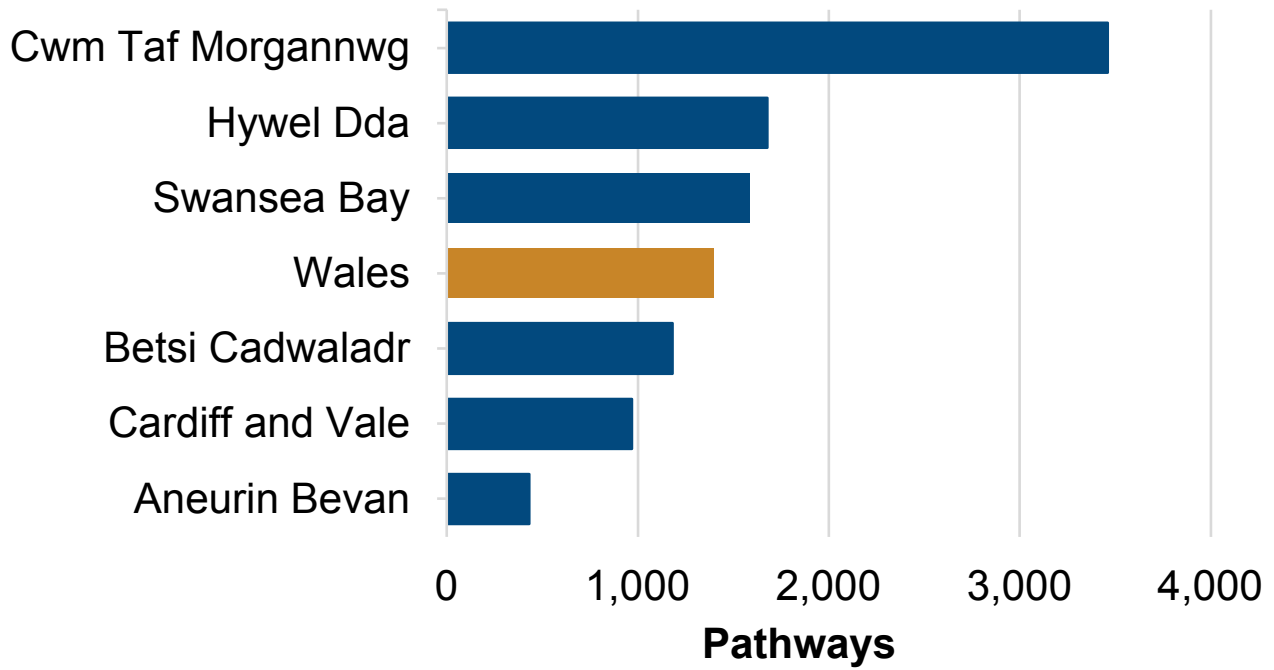
**Figure 14a: Patient pathways waiting over the target time for diagnostic tests, per 100,000**

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population, by Local Health Board, March 2023

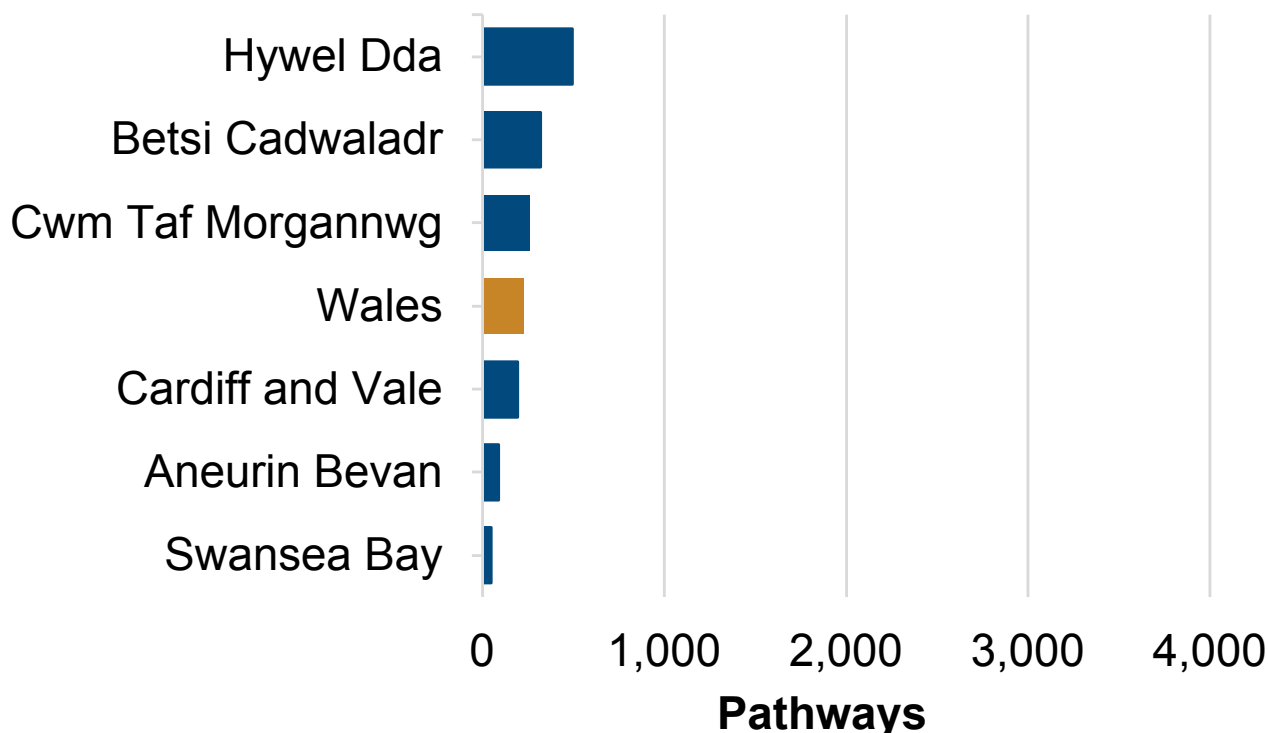


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Figure 14b: Patient pathways waiting over the target time for therapy services, per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, March 2023



Description of Figure 14: Bar charts showing all Local Health Boards have pathways waiting more than the target time for diagnostics and therapies.

Source: Diagnostic and therapy services waiting times, Digital Health and Care Wales

### Diagnostic and Therapy Services Waiting Times by week on StatsWales

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this figure because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys is made available in previous StatsWales link.

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At the end of March, around 43,300 patient pathways were waiting longer than the target time for diagnostics. This was a slight increase of 0.9% compared to the previous month.

At the end of March there were just over 7,000 patient pathways waiting longer than the target time for therapies. This was a decrease of 7.2% compared to the previous month and a 51.6% fall from the peak in March 2022.

The highest number of diagnostic pathways waiting more than the target time per 100,000 population was in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (3,460) and the highest number of therapies was in Hywel Dda (495).

Median waiting times had been relatively stable for diagnostic tests since 2017 (2.8 weeks on average) and for therapy services since 2018 (3.6 weeks on average). Median waiting times for both services peaked in 2020 (14.3 weeks for diagnostics and 14.9 weeks for therapies).

In March, the median waiting time for diagnostic tests was 5.3 weeks, compared to 5.2 weeks in the previous month. The median waiting time for therapy services was 4.6 weeks, compared to 4.4 weeks in the previous month.

## Referral to treatment time

Referral to treatment time statistics show monthly data on waiting times for both open and closed pathways following a referral by a GP or other medical practitioner to hospital for treatment in the NHS. Open pathways are those that remain on the waiting list for treatment, whereas closed pathways are those taken off the waiting list.

Activity is measured by patient pathways, which differs to the number of patients. More information on this difference is available in the [Welsh Government's Chief Statisticians blog](#).

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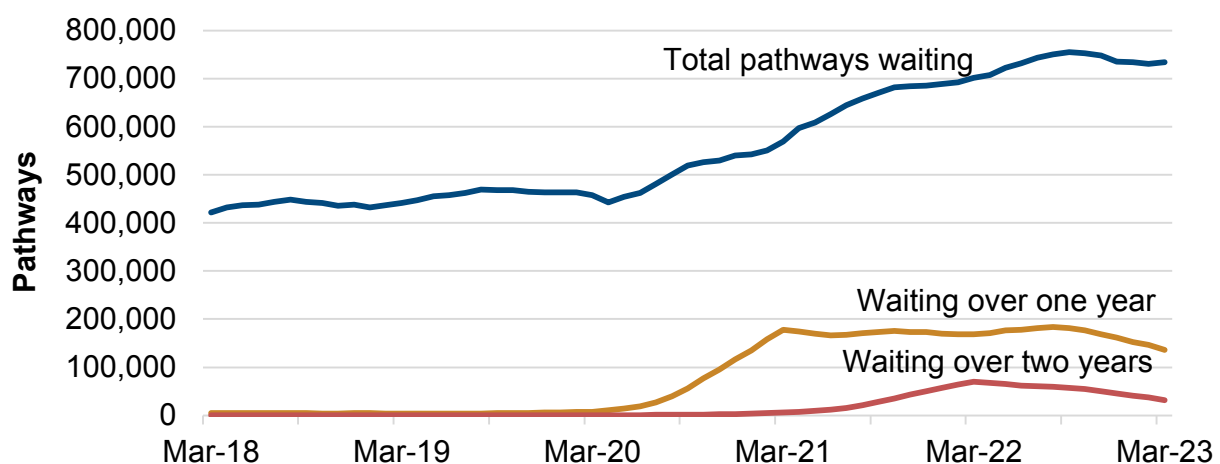
Also published is newly collected management information for the number of individual patients on treatment waiting lists in Wales.

## Performance

### Targets

- No patients waiting longer than two years in most specialities by March 2023, and no patients waiting longer than one year in most specialities by Spring 2025 (new targets established in the [planned care recovery plan](#)).
- 95% of patients waiting less than 26 weeks from referral.
- No patients waiting more than 36 weeks for treatment from referral.

Figure 15: Patient pathways waiting to start treatment, March 2018 to March 2023



Description of Figure 15: Line chart showing that since the coronavirus pandemic the number waiting has increased significantly but has recently started to fall. The number of patients waiting longer than one year and two years both saw a rise due to the coronavirus pandemic, but numbers are now falling.

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Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

## Patient pathways waiting to start treatment by month, grouped weeks and stage of pathway on StatsWales

Figure 16a: Patient pathways waiting to start treatment, per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, March 2023 (total waiting) [Note 1]

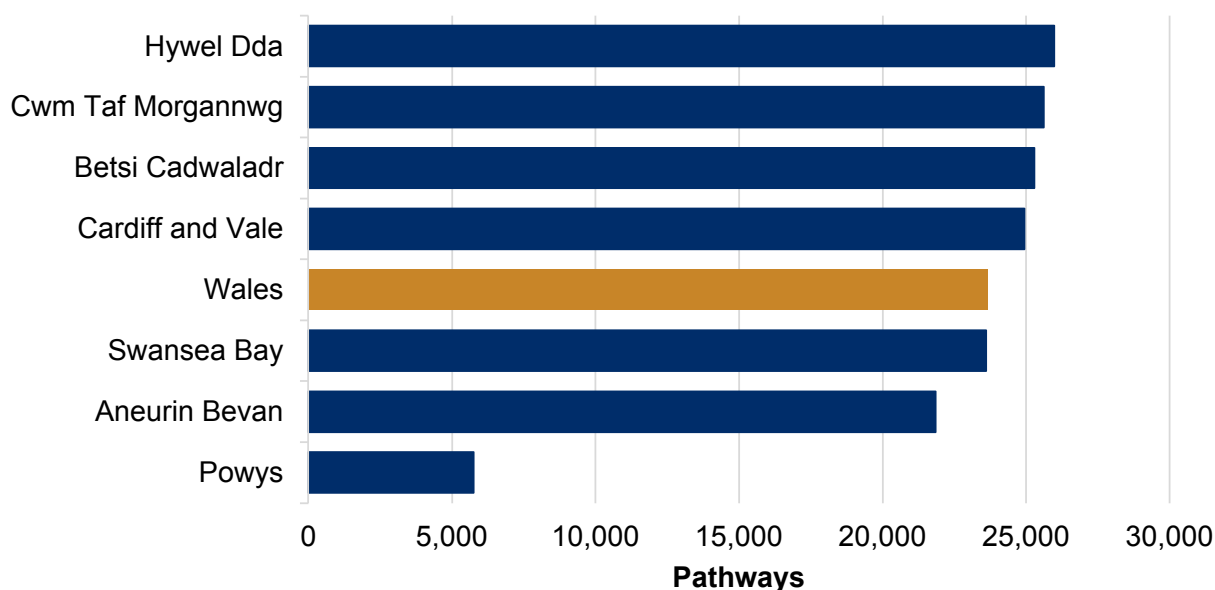
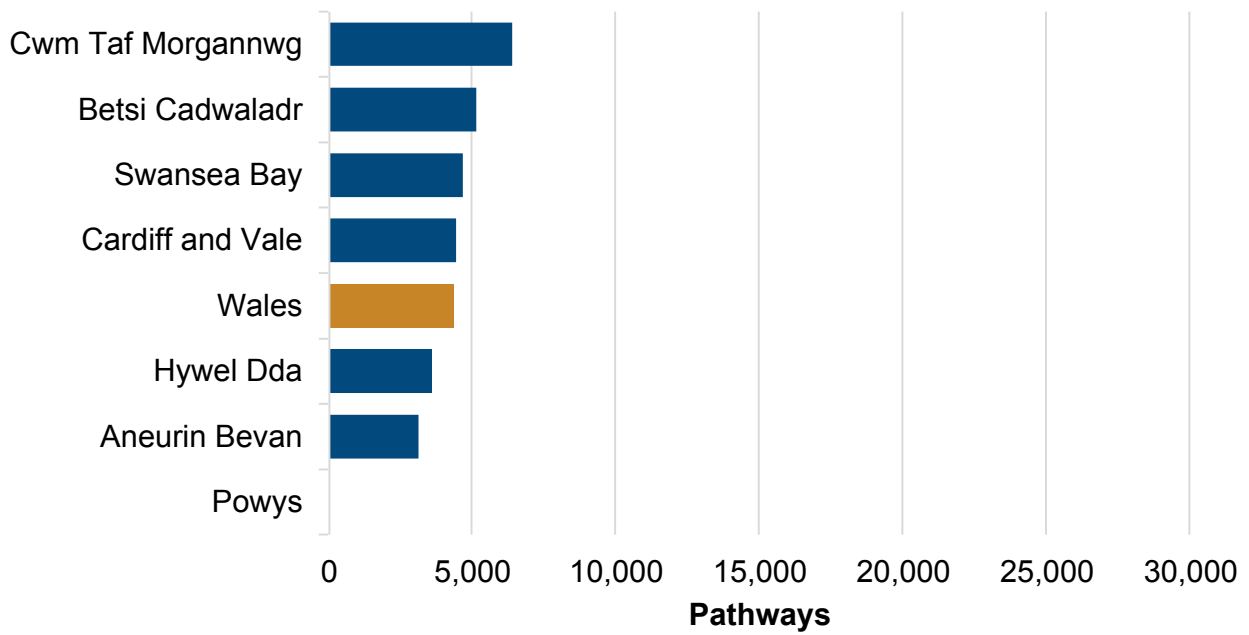


Figure 16b: Patient pathways waiting to start treatment, per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, March 2023 (waiting more than 1 year) [Note 1]

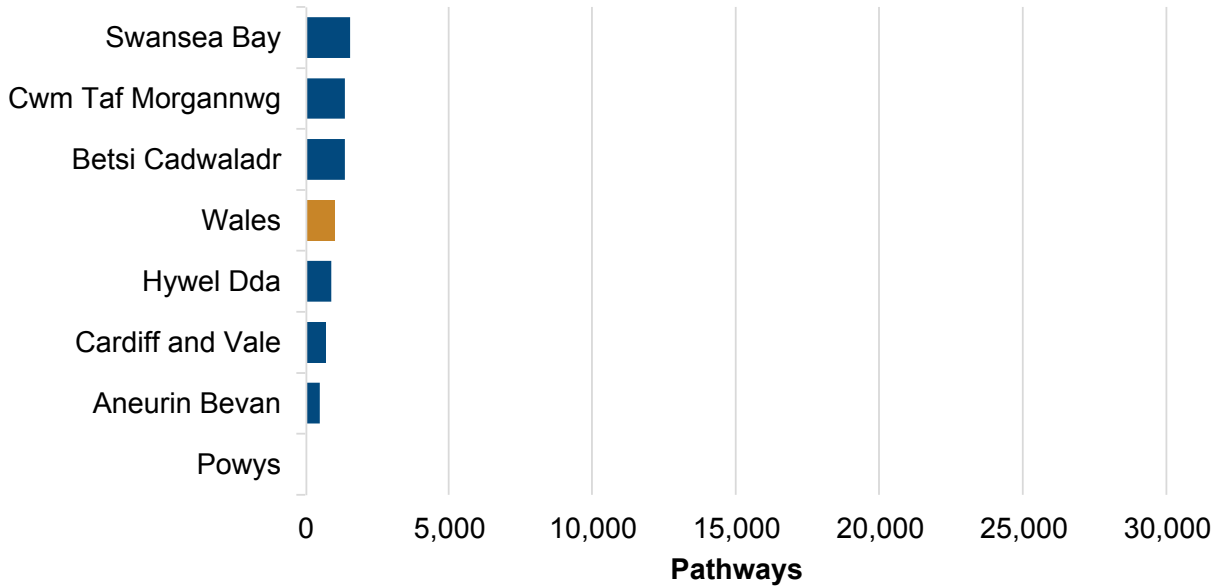
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**Figure 16c: Patient pathways waiting to start treatment, per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, March 2023 (waiting more than 2 years) [Note 1]**



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Description of Figure 16: Bar charts showing that, adjusted by population, Aneurin Bevan has the least pathways waiting more than one or two years and the fewest pathways waiting in total.

Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

### **Patient pathways waiting to start treatment by month, grouped weeks and stage of pathway on StatsWales**

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this figure because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys is made available in previous StatsWales link.

In March there were about 734,700 patient pathways waiting to start treatment. After falling for five consecutive months, this was an increase of over 2,000 patients from February, high in historical context and 58.5% higher than February 2020.

Headline measures for open pathways across the UK are not comparable. There are large differences in coverage between Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland statistics, meaning they should not be compared at all. With England, current understanding suggests a broadly comparable number can be produced for Wales by removing some known non-consultant led pathways which are not counted in England. On that basis, there are around 654,000 open pathways on consultant-led pathways in Wales, equivalent to one pathway (not patient) for every 4.8 people. For England, the figure in March was one pathway for every 7.7 people. These comparisons are explored further in this [Chief Statistician's blog](#).

Of the 734,700 about 135,800 pathways were waiting more than one year in March. This number has fallen for the seventh consecutive month, after being relatively stable since spring 2021. Of the 734,700 about 31,700 pathways were

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waiting more than two years, 55% lower than the peak in March 2022 and falling since.

Adjusted by population, Hywel Dda had highest number of pathways waiting (25,973 per 100,000). The most waiting more than one year was in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (6,410) and the most waiting more than two years was in Swansea Bay (1,563). Aneurin Bevan had the lowest numbers waiting on all three measures.

The planned care recovery plan established a target to eliminate two year waits in most specialties by March 2023. This is assessed on the basis that 'most' refers to all specialties excluding seven recognised as exceptionally challenging, with large numbers waiting even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. These are Dermatology, General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Urology, Gynaecology, Orthopaedics and Ear, Nose and Throat.

On this basis, this target has not been met as in March there were a further 17 specialties with pathways waiting more than two years accounting for 4,300 pathways. The seven specialties outside the scope of this target account for the remaining 27,400 pathways waiting more than two years.

The number of patient pathways is not the same as the number of individual patients, because some people have multiple open pathways.

We do not have official statistics on the number of individual patients waiting to start treatment. However, newly collected management information suggests that in March, when the National Statistics (above) reported there were about 734,700 open patient pathways, there were estimated to be about 576,000 individual patients on treatment waiting lists in Wales. After falling for five consecutive months, this was an increase of over 2,000 patients from February 2023.

Unlike the National Statistics elsewhere in this release, which have been

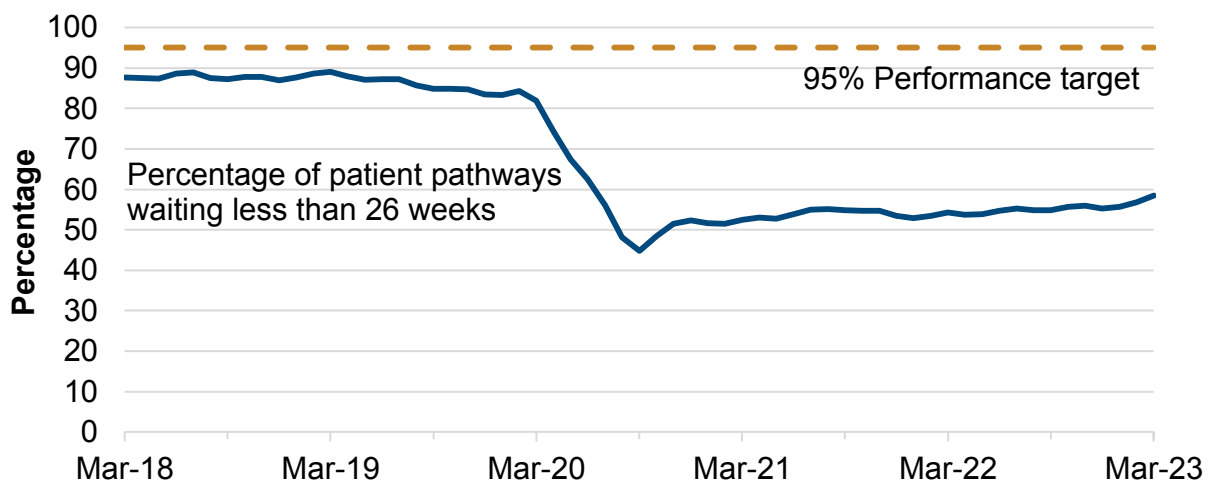
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independently assessed against the Code of Practice for statistics, this estimate is based on newly collected management information. Whilst the principles of the Code of Practice have been applied, quality assurance is not to the level of the National Statistics. Work is ongoing to further understand the strengths and limitations of this data and this will be communicated as we learn more. For these reasons there is greater uncertainty around this estimate than with the other figures in this release. However, the level of public interest in understanding the number of patients in addition to the number of patient pathways adds sufficient value to warrant making this available.

**Figure 17: Percentage of patient pathways waiting less than 26 weeks, March 2018 to March 2023**



Description of Figure 17: Line chart showing that during the coronavirus pandemic the percentage of patients waiting less than 26 weeks decreased sharply, and performance has since stabilized between 50 to 60%.

Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

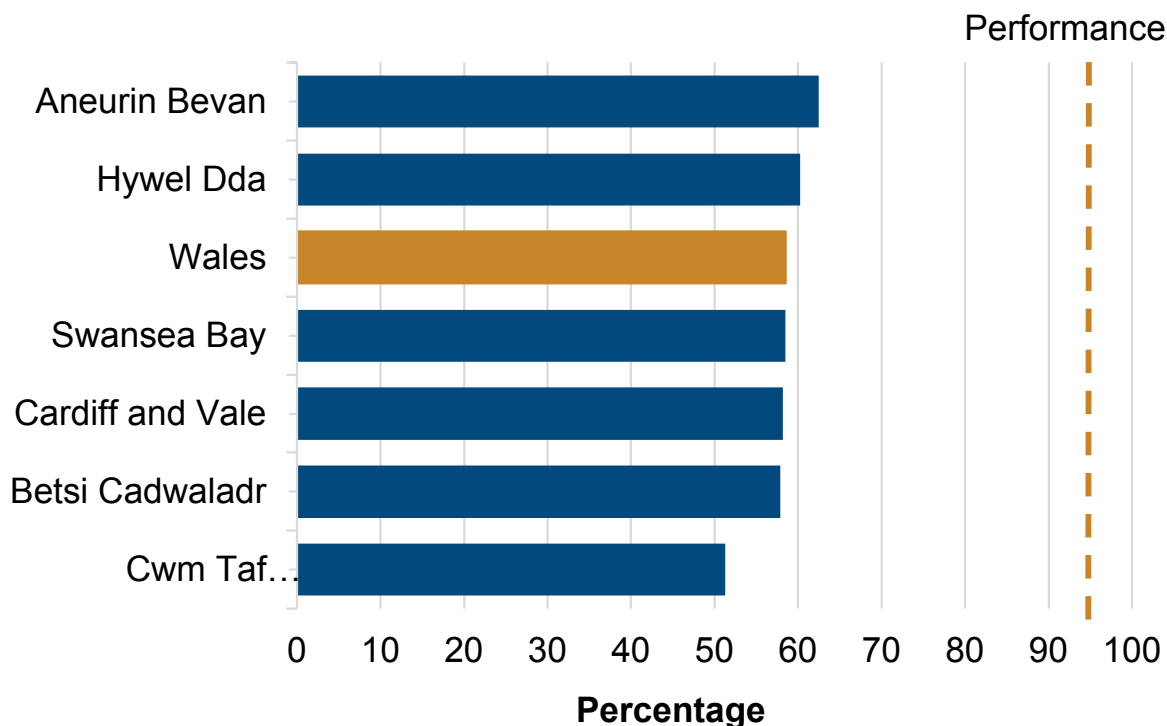
**Percentage of patient pathways waiting to start treatment within target time by month and grouped weeks on StatsWales**

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**Figure 18: Percentage of patient pathways waiting less than 26 weeks, per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, March 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 18: Bar chart showing performance in all Local Health Boards is lower than the target of 95%.

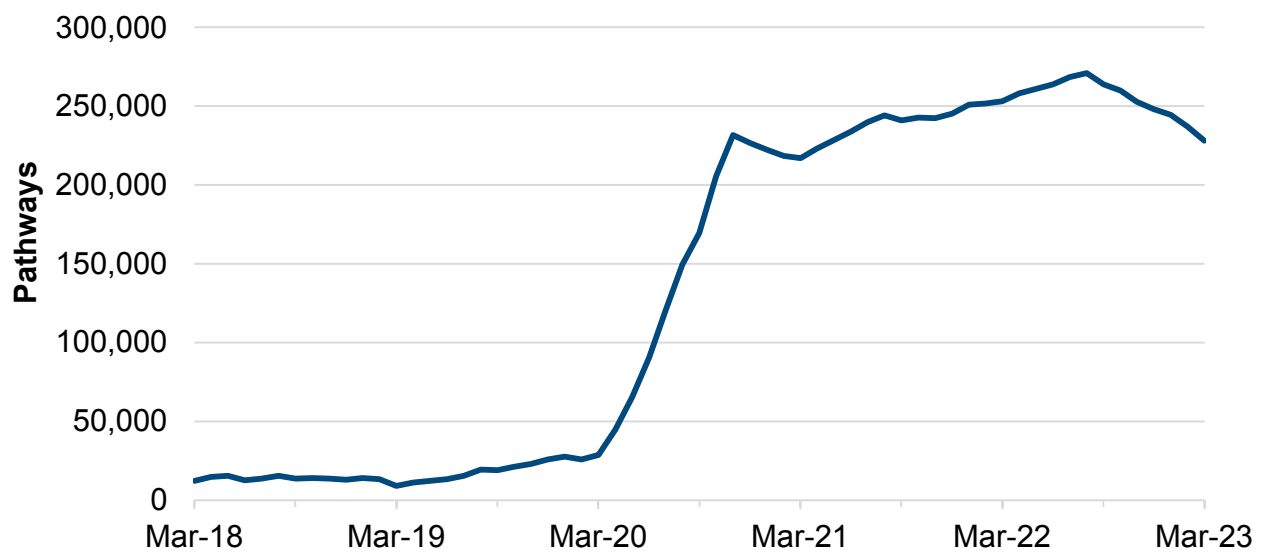
Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

**Percentage of patient pathways waiting to start treatment within target time by month and grouped weeks on StatsWales**

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this figure because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys is made available in previous StatsWales link.

Of the about 734,700 patient pathways waiting to start treatment, by the end of March, 58.5% had been waiting less than 26 weeks. This was 1.6 percentage points higher than in the previous month but 25.8 percentage points lower than February 2020. The highest proportion waiting less than 26 weeks was in Aneurin Bevan health board (62.5%) and the lowest was in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (51.3%).

**Figure 19: Patient pathways waiting more than 36 weeks, by month and weeks waited, March 2018 to March 2023**



Description of Figure 19: Line chart showing the number of patient pathways waiting more than 36 weeks, which increased rapidly during the coronavirus pandemic. Throughout 2022 the number increased, though at a slower rate, but it has been coming down since mid-2022.

Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

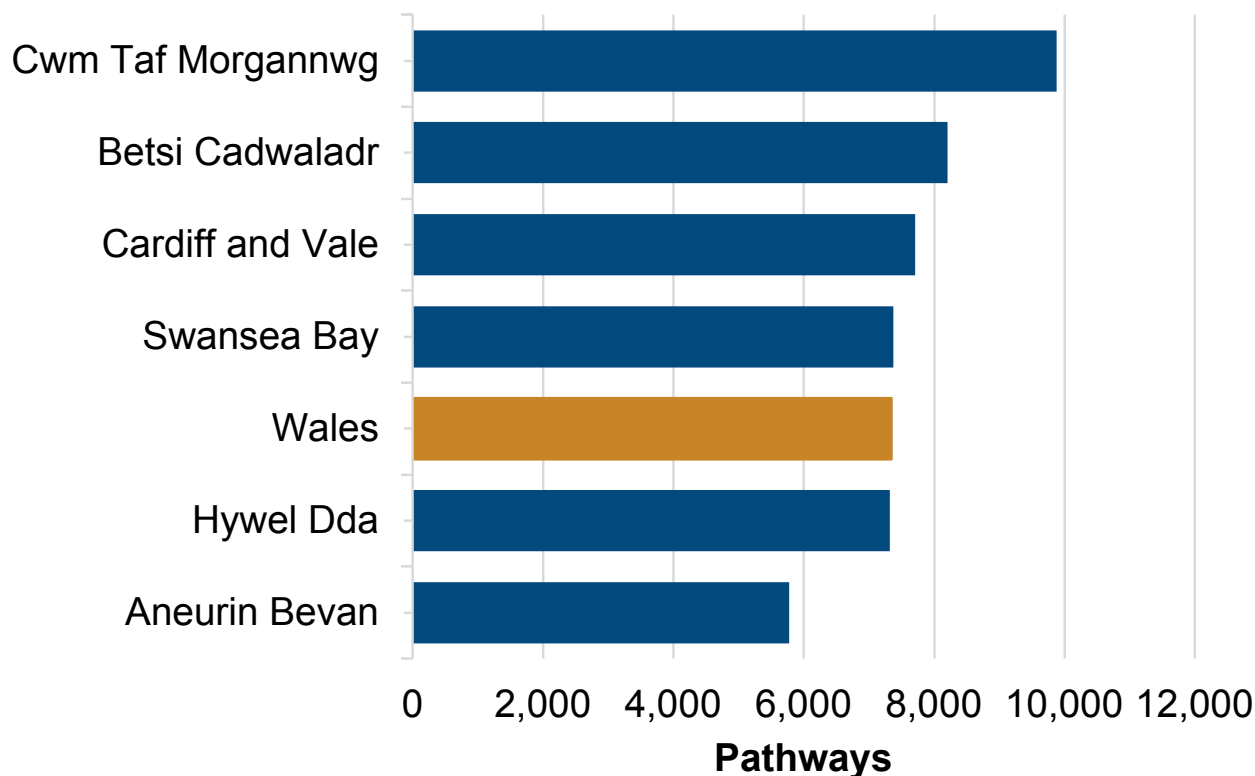
### Percentage of patient pathways waiting to start treatment within target time by month and grouped weeks on StatsWales

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Figure 20: Patient pathways waiting more than 36 weeks, per 100,000 population, by Local Health Board, March 2023 [Note 1]



Description of figure 20: Bar chart showing the number of patient pathways waiting more than 36 weeks, adjusted by population size, was highest in Cwm Taf Morgannwg and lowest in Aneurin Bevan.

Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

### Percentage of patient pathways waiting to start treatment within target time by month and grouped weeks on StatsWales

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this figure because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys is made

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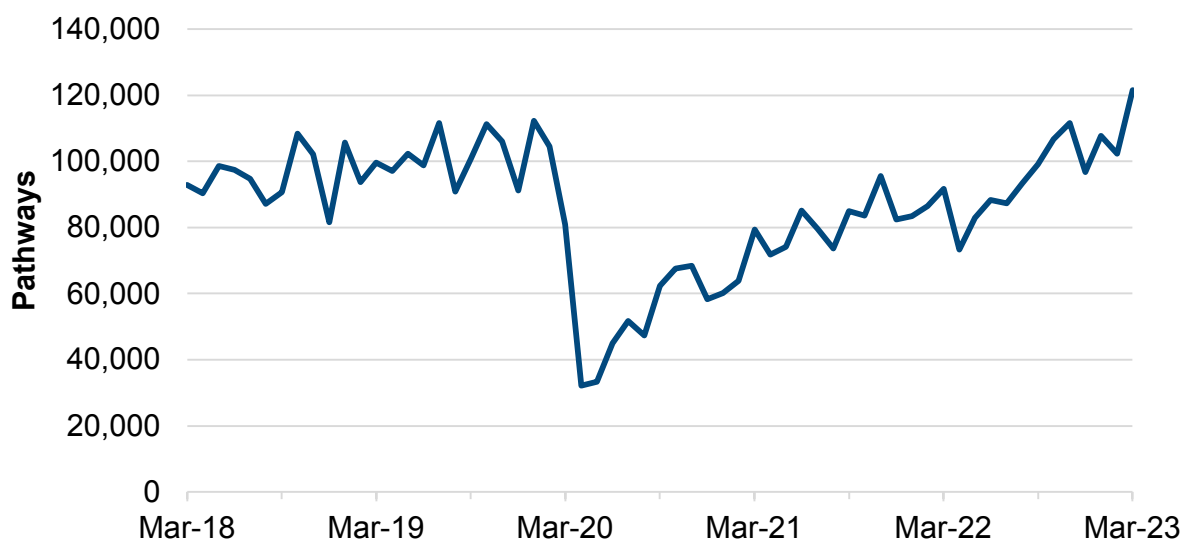
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available in previous StatsWales link.

In March, almost 228,000 patient pathways had been waiting more than 36 weeks. This represented 31.0% of all patient pathways waiting to start treatment. This was 9,049 (or 3.8%) fewer than in the previous month, high in historical context, but the lowest since April 2021. The highest number of pathways waiting more than 36 weeks per 100,000 population was in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (9,878), and the lowest was in Aneurin Bevan (5,779).

The median time waiting to start treatment had generally been around 10 weeks pre pandemic between late 2013 and February 2020. This increased during the pandemic and peaked at a record high of 29 weeks in October 2020. In March, the median waiting time was 20.0 weeks, which was a decrease from 20.8 weeks in the previous month.

Figure 21: Closed patient pathways, March 2018 to March 2023 [Note 1]



Description of figure 21: Line chart showing the number of patient pathways closed, which generally fluctuates. After a big decrease in March 2020 due to

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the coronavirus pandemic, the number of closed pathways has steadily risen to pre-pandemic levels.

Source: Referral to treatment times, Digital Health and Care Wales

## Closed patient pathways by month, local health board and weeks waiting on StatsWales

[Note 1]: Data revised to now include Cwm Taf Morgannwg health board closed pathways. Up to the July 2022 statistical release, the data series was not available for Cwm Tag Morgannwg. More details are available in the [quality information](#).

The number of patient pathways closed in March was 101,557. This was an average of 5,285 patient pathways closed per working day. This was an increase of 168 patient pathways (or 3.3%) closed per working day from the previous month.

## Cancer services

A number of [wider measures from the suspected cancer pathway](#) are produced by Digital Health and Care Wales are published alongside this statistical release.

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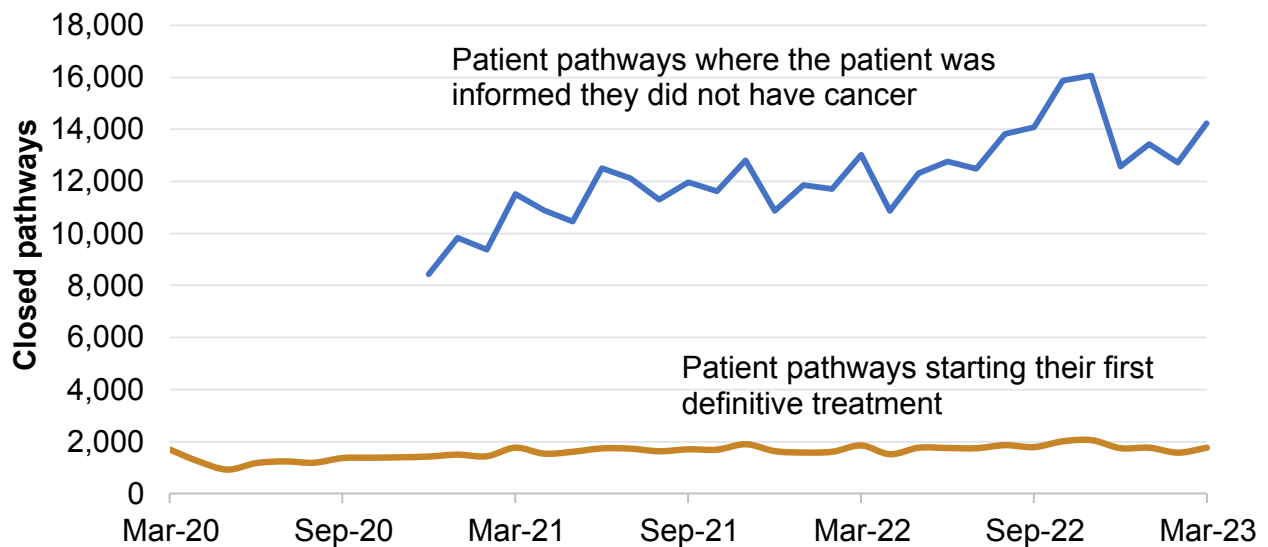
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## Activity

**Figure 22: Closed suspected cancer pathways in the month, March 2020 to March 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 22: Line chart showing the number of patients informed they do not have cancer, which fluctuates but generally showing an upwards trend, and the number of patients starting their first definitive treatment, which has been stable since recording began.

Source: Suspected Cancer Pathway, Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW)

### Suspected cancer pathway (closed pathways) on StatsWales

[Note 1]: New suspected cancer pathway data collection was introduced in December 2020.

In March 1,761 pathways where the patient was newly diagnosed with cancer

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started their first definitive treatment in the month. This was an increase of 12.0% compared to the previous month.

14,230 pathways were closed following the patient being informed they did not have cancer. This is an increase of 11.8% compared to the previous month.

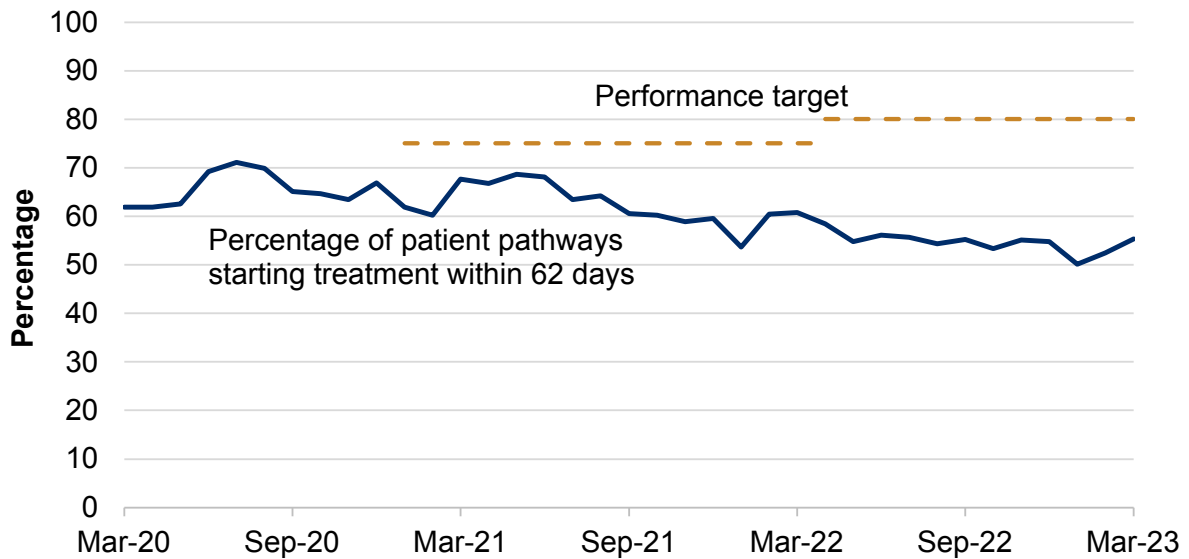
In March, 16,802 patient pathways were opened in the month following a new suspicion of cancer. This was an increase of 2,016 (13.6%) on the previous month and an increase of 9.1% compared to March 2022.

## Performance

### Target

- At least 75% of patients should start treatment within 62 days (without suspensions) of first being suspected of cancer. Data published for time periods before December 2020 are not subject to the target.
- The [planned care recovery plan](#) established a new target of 80%, to be reached by 2026.

**Figure 23: Percentage of pathways where the patient started their first definitive treatment within the target time, March 2020 to March 2023 [Note 1]**



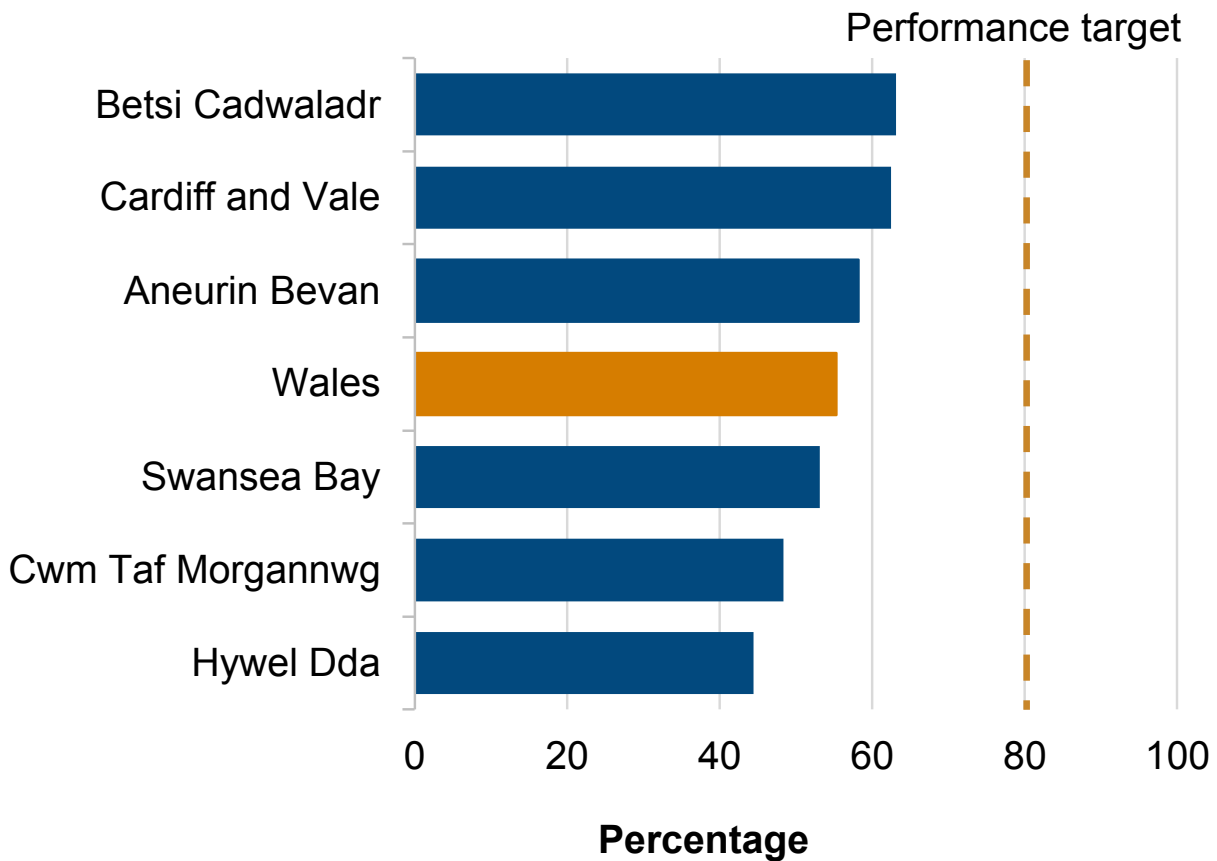
Description of Figure 23: Line chart showing the percentage of patients that started their first definitive treatment within 62 days of first being suspected of cancer and the 80% performance target. Performance fluctuates, but there is a general downwards trend in recent years.

Source: Suspected Cancer Pathway, Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW)

### Suspected cancer pathway (closed pathways) on StatsWales

[Note 1]: New suspected cancer pathway data collection was introduced in December 2020, with a performance target of 75%. This target was updated to 80% in April 2022 as part of the planned care recovery plan.

**Figure 24: Percentage of pathways where the patient started their first definitive treatment within the target time, by Local Health Board, March 2023 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 24: Bar chart showing performance in all Local Health Boards was below the target level of 80%.

Source: Suspected Cancer Pathway, Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW)

**Suspected cancer pathway (closed pathways) on StatsWales**

[Note 1]: Powys Teaching health board is excluded from this analysis because there are significant differences in the number and type of services provided in Powys compared with other Local Health Boards. Data for Powys are available

on StatsWales.

In March, 55.3% (974 out of 1,761) of pathways started their first definitive treatment within 62 days of first being suspected of cancer. This was 2.8 percentage points higher than the previous month, which was the second lowest on record, but 5.5 percentage points lower than March 2022 and low in historical context.

The highest proportion of pathways starting within 62 days was in Betsi Cadwaladr (63.1%) and the lowest was in Hywel Dda (44.5%).

## Quality and methodology information

All quality and methodology information in relation to this statistical release can be found in the [NHS activity and performance summary: quality report](#)

## Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the

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Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

## We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [stats.healthinfo@gov.wales](mailto:stats.healthinfo@gov.wales).

## Next update

22 June 2023

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