

NHS Wales Waiting times – termly monitoring report

Y Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol | Tachwedd 2025
Health and Social Care Committee | November 2025

Introduction

This is the Committee's **final monitoring report** of NHS Wales planned care recovery targets before the Senedd election. The recovery targets, which were set in April 2022, to reduce waiting times for people in Wales include:

- No one waiting longer than a year for their first outpatient appointment **by the end of 2022**.
- Eliminate the number of people waiting longer than two years in most specialities **by March 2023**.
- Eliminate the number of people waiting longer than one year in most specialities **by Spring 2025**.
- Increase the speed of diagnostic testing and reporting to eight weeks and 14 weeks for therapy interventions **by Spring 2024**.
- Cancer diagnosis and treatment to be undertaken within 62 days for 80% of people **by 2026** (with an interim recovery target to meet the single cancer pathway within 62 days for 70% of people **by March 2023**).

The statistics used in this briefing are taken from the Welsh Government's NHS activity and performance summary: August and September 2025 and StatsWales.



Further information:

- Waiting times data are published monthly on the [StatsWales website](#) with a two-month lag.
- Previous monitoring reports are available on the [Committee's website](#).
- A link to [Ministerial summit reports](#) relating to orthopaedics, ophthalmology, ENT and cancer are published on [the Welsh Government website](#).
- Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) now publishes a [secondary care dashboard](#) which provides data on outpatients appointments, inpatient admissions and day case activity undertaken in Wales.
- Information about current waiting times by speciality for each health board is provided on the [NHS 111 Wales - Planned Care](#) website. A key recommendation made the Committee in its [Waiting well? The impact of the waiting times backlog on people in Wales](#).

N.B. 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](#).

The [Welsh Government's statistical update](#) reports that in August 2025, when there were just under 790,600 open patient pathways, there were about 613,700 individual patients on treatment waiting lists in Wales.

Overview

When the Welsh Government ~~published its Planned Care Recovery Plan~~ in April 2022, just under 707,100 patient pathways were waiting for NHS treatment. Of these, more than 68,000 had been waiting longer than two years – a backlog that had grown significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The plan set a target to eliminate two-year waits in most specialties by March 2023 and one-year waits in most specialties by Spring 2025, ~~backed by over £1 billion of funding~~. However, none of these targets were met.

The number of patient pathways waiting decreased from just over 794,500 in June 2025, to just under 790,600 at the end of August 2025. Provisional data for September 2025 indicates around 775,700 patient pathways. This means around **1 in 4 people** in Wales are waiting for NHS treatment.

The Welsh Government has failed to meet any of the targets it has set so far:

- **No one waiting longer than a year for their first outpatient appointment by the end of 2022:** In August 2025, just over 71,700 patient pathways were waiting longer than one year for a first outpatient appointment.
- **Eliminate the number of people waiting longer than two years in most specialities by March 2023:** In August 2025, just over 8,700 patient pathways were waiting more than two years.
- **Eliminate the number of people waiting longer than one year in most specialities by Spring 2025:** In August 2025: Just under 156,200 patient pathways were waiting more than one year.
- **Increase the speed of diagnostic testing and reporting to eight weeks and 14 weeks for therapy interventions by Spring 2024:** In August 2025, the number waiting longer than 8 weeks (the target for maximum wait) was just under 46,700. The number waiting longer than 14 weeks for therapies (the target maximum wait) was just over 4,800.
- **Cancer diagnosis and treatment to be undertaken within 62 days for 80% of people by 2026 (with an interim recovery target to meet the single cancer pathway within 62 days for 70% of people by March 2023):** In August 2025, 61.8% of patients started cancer treatment within 62 days.

Recovery target 1: First outpatient appointment

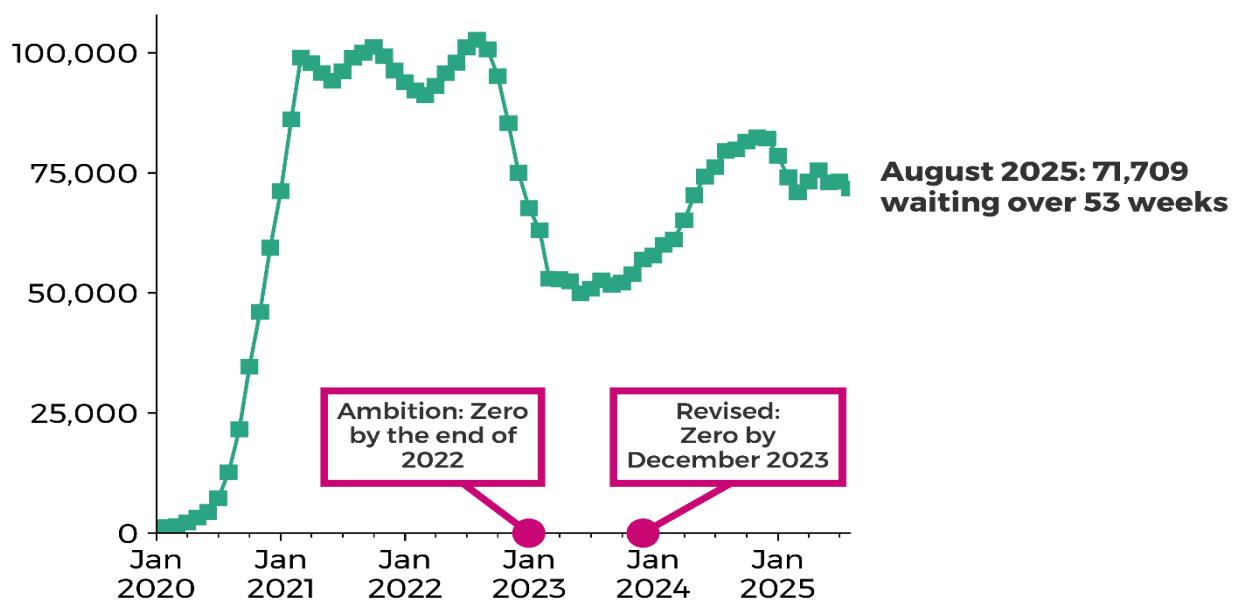
Recovery plan target 1: No patients to be waiting longer than a year for their first outpatient appointment by the end of 2022

In April 2022, the Welsh Government set a target to ensure that no patient would wait longer than a year for their first outpatient appointment by the end of 2022. Despite efforts to reduce waiting times, this target was missed, and a revised target for the end of 2023 also went unmet.

As shown in Figure 1 below, the number of patient pathways waiting over a year for their first outpatient appointment has fluctuated. In April 2024, there were 65,111 such pathways - a 36.6% decrease from the peak in August 2022. However, by September 2024, the number had risen again to 79,855, and by November 2024, it had reached 82,335.

The number of patient pathways waiting over a year for a first outpatient appointment decreased to just over 71,700 in August 2025 – a 30.2% reduction from the peak in August 2022. However, the target of zero has not been met.

Figure 1: Number of patient pathways waiting over 53 weeks for their first outpatient appointment



Source: StatsWales, [Patient pathways waiting to start treatment by month, grouped weeks and stage of pathway](#)

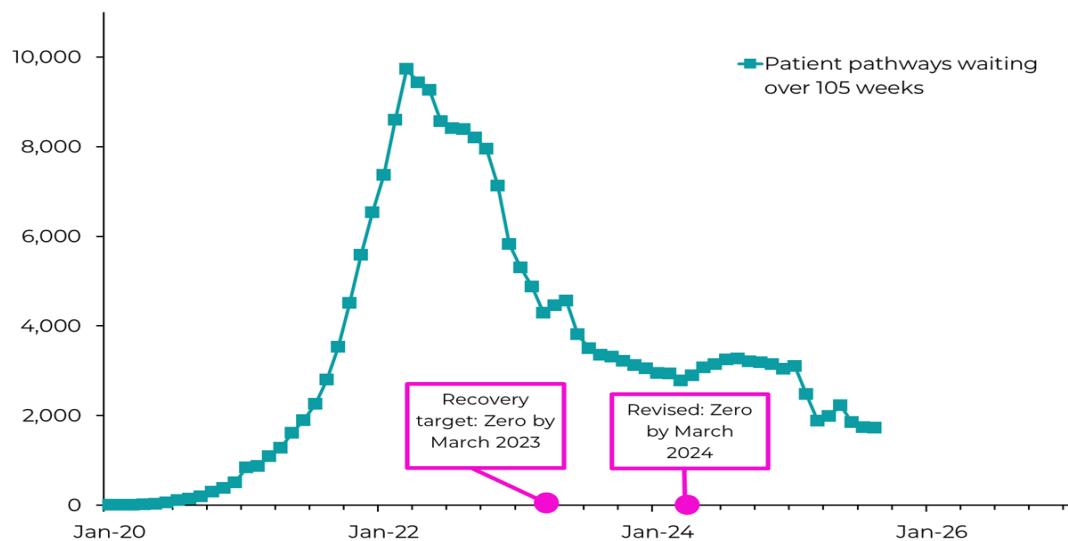
Recovery target 2: Two-year waiting targets

Recovery plan target 2: Eliminate the number of people waiting longer than two years to start treatment in most specialties by March 2023

The Planned care recovery plan established a target to eliminate two-year waits in most specialities by March 2023. The target was not met by March 2023 and has still not been achieved.

In August 2025, there were just under 790,600 patient pathways waiting to start treatment, a decrease of around 3,900 pathways from June 2025. Of the total patient pathways, just over 8,700 were waiting more than two years for treatment. That's more than three quarters (87.6%) lower than the peak in March 2022. However, two-year waits increased in August 2025 compared to July 2025. In June, just over 7,447 patient pathways were waiting more than two years. By the end of July, this increased to 8,005 pathways and in August 2025, it further increased to more than 8,700 patient pathways. So, while June saw the lowest level in four years, the number of two-year waits rose in both July and August, indicating a reversal of the earlier downward trend.

Figure 2: Number of patient pathways waiting over 105 weeks to start treatment in most specialities (excluding the seven recognised as exceptionally challenging)



Source: StatsWales, [Patient pathways waiting to start treatment by month, grouped weeks and stage of pathway](#)

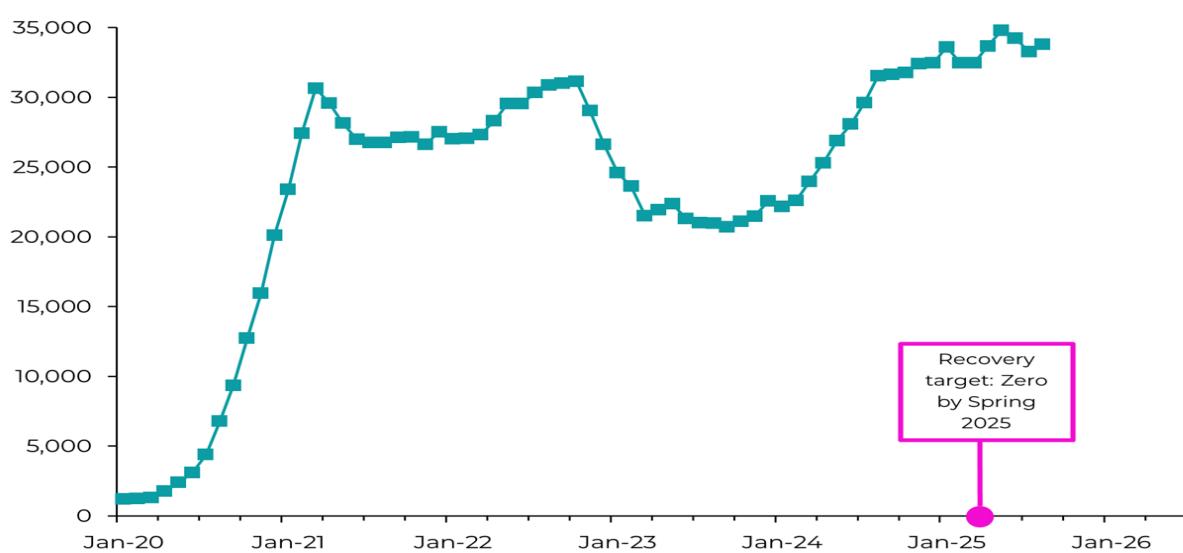
It's also worth noting the recovery target to eliminate two-year waits relates to all but seven "exceptionally challenging" specialities. These are Dermatology, General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Urology, Gynaecology, Orthopaedics and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT). In August 2025, there were still a further 14 specialities with pathways waiting more than two years. Amongst those with the highest number of patient pathways waiting over two years for treatment are: Oral Surgery (806), Orthodontics (256), Gastroenterology (247), Vascular Surgery (150) and Pain Management (120).

Recovery Target 3: One-year waiting targets

Recovery target 3: Eliminate the number of people waiting longer than one year to start treatment in most specialties by Spring 2025

The recovery plan for planned care set a target to eliminate the backlog of patients waiting more than one year to start treatment in 'most' specialties by spring 2025. However, in August 2025 there were just under 156,200 patient pathways still waiting over a year for treatment. The Welsh Government describes the trajectory of those waiting longer than one year as "changeable". The aim was for all health boards to meet this revised target by spring 2025.

Figure 3: Number of patient pathways waiting over 53 weeks to start treatment in most specialties (excluding the seven recognised as exceptionally challenging)

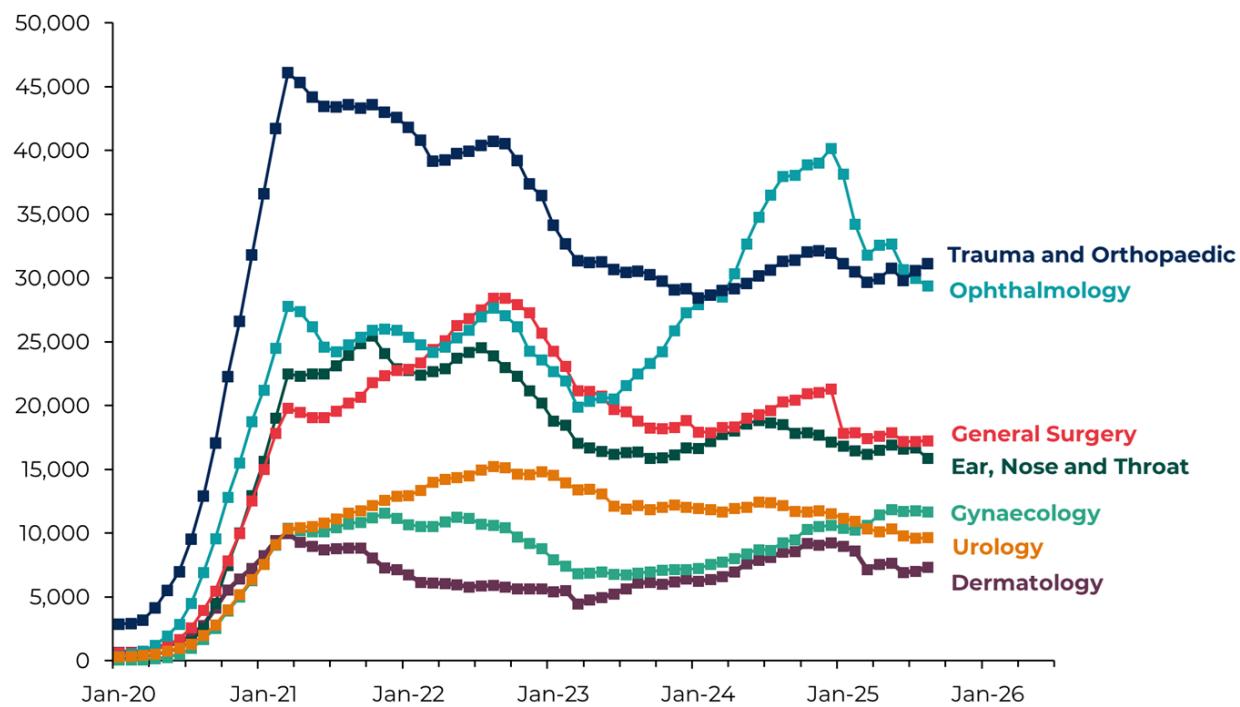


Source: StatsWales, [Patient pathways waiting to start treatment by month, grouped weeks and stage of pathway](#)

As previously noted, there are seven specialties recognised as “exceptionally challenging” by the Welsh Government. Figure 4 below shows the number of patient pathways waiting over one year (53 weeks) for treatment in each of those specialties. In August 2025, the number of patient pathways waiting over one year for treatment was:

- **Ophthalmology:** 29,392 patient pathways
- **Trauma and Orthopaedics:** 31,149 patient pathways
- **General Surgery:** 17,279 patient pathways
- **Ear, Nose and Throat:** 15,871 patient pathways
- **Urology:** 9,670 patient pathways
- **Gynaecology:** 11,700 patient pathways
- **Dermatology:** 7,330 patient pathways

Figure 4: Number of patient pathways waiting over 53 weeks to start treatment in the seven specialties recognised as exceptionally challenging



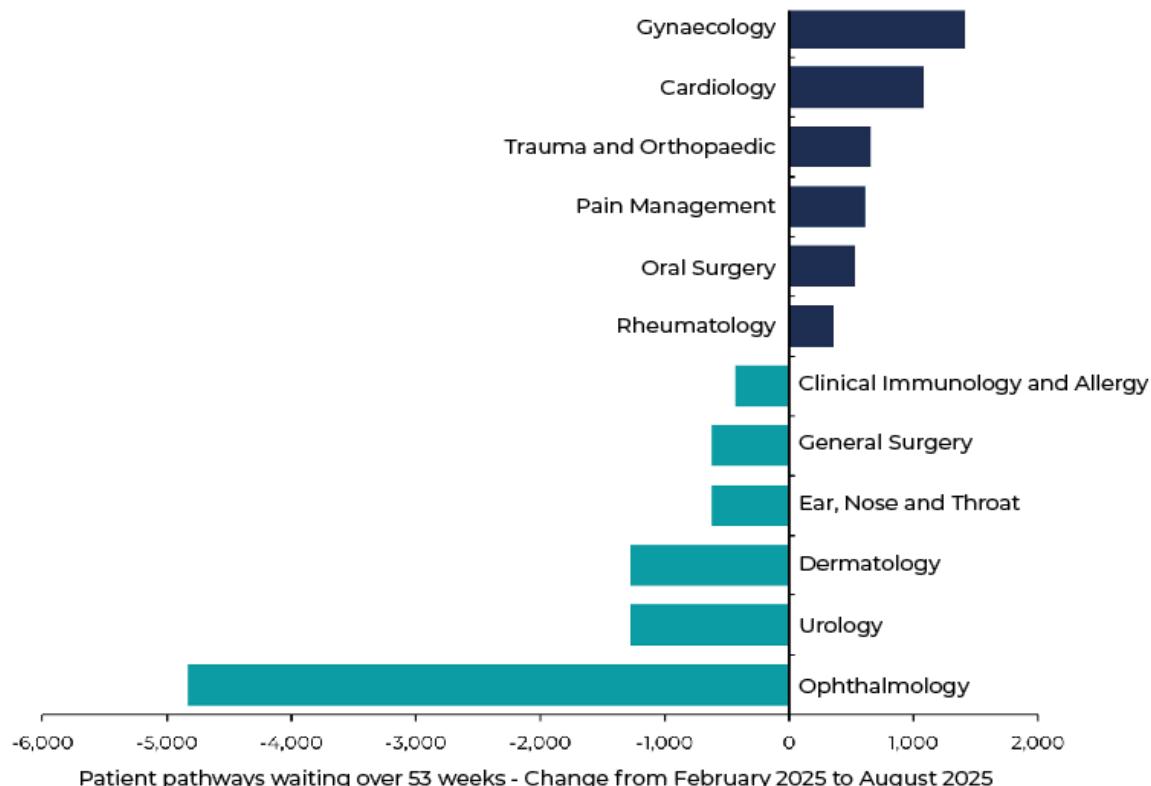
Source: StatsWales, [Patient pathways waiting to start treatment by month, grouped weeks and stage of pathway](#)

The specific reasons for the challenges in Dermatology, General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Urology, Gynaecology, Orthopaedics and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) are not explicitly mentioned in the Welsh Government's planned care recovery plan, but it is noted that these specialties had large numbers waiting prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other specialities - excluding the seven 'exceptionally challenging' referred to above, also had a higher than average percentage of their pathways waiting over a year to begin treatment in August 2025. These included clinical immunology and allergy (39.7% of its 1,869 pathways), oral surgery (25.1% of its 28,594 pathways), and vascular surgery (23.1% of its 9,965 pathways).

Figure 5 below shows the six specialties with the biggest increases in the number of patient pathways over the last 6 months and the six with the biggest decreases. This covers most of the 'exceptionally challenging' specialties.

Figure 5: Six largest increases and six largest decreases in the number of patient pathways waiting over 53 weeks to start treatment, by specialty; six months from February 2025 to August 2025



Source: StatsWales, [Patient pathways waiting to start treatment by month, grouped weeks and stage of pathway](#)

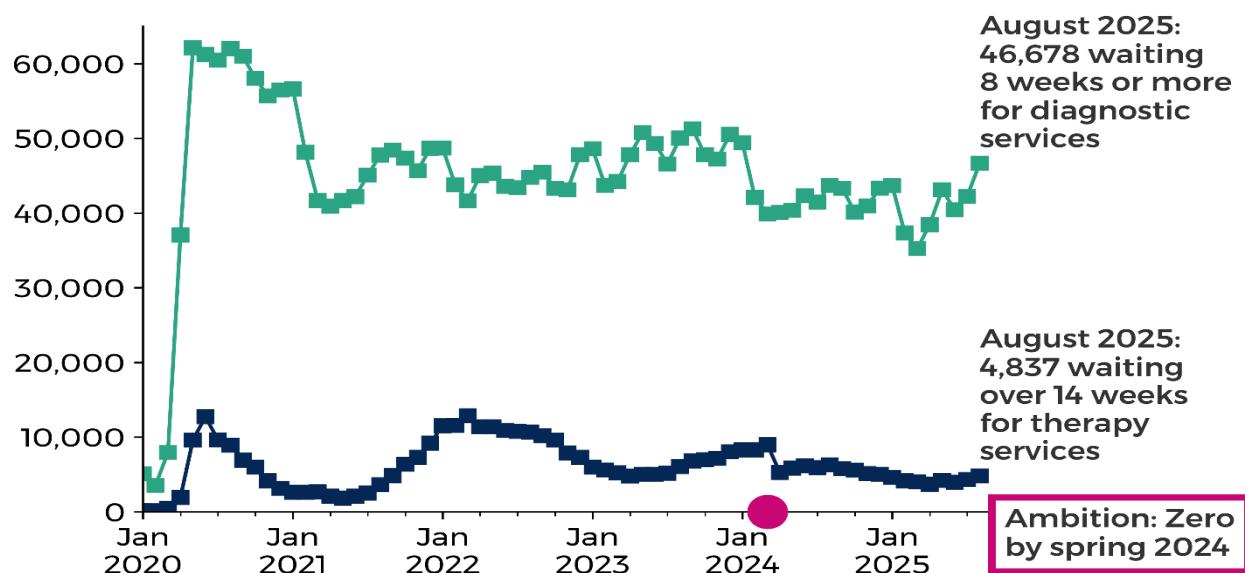
Recovery target 4: Diagnostic testing and therapy interventions

Ambition 4: Increase the speed of diagnostic testing and reporting to eight weeks and 14 weeks for therapy interventions by Spring (March) 2024

In August 2025, there was an increase in the number of patient pathways waiting for diagnostics. Diagnostic tests include blood tests, imaging studies, endoscopy, biopsy, and electrocardiogram etc. The number of patient pathways waiting **longer than 8 weeks** (the target maximum wait) increased to 46,678 patient pathways. This means the planned care recovery target to eliminate waits of more than 8 weeks by March 2024 was not met.

The number of patient pathways waiting for therapies also increased in August 2025. Therapy interventions include psychotherapy, radiation therapy, surgery and occupational therapy etc. The number waiting **longer than 14 weeks** (the target maximum wait) was just over 4,800. This means the planned care recovery target to eliminate waits of more than 14 weeks by March 2024 was not met.

Figure 6: Number of patient pathways waiting 8 weeks or more for diagnostic services and over 14 weeks for therapy services



Source: StatsWales, [Diagnostic and therapy services waiting times by month](#)

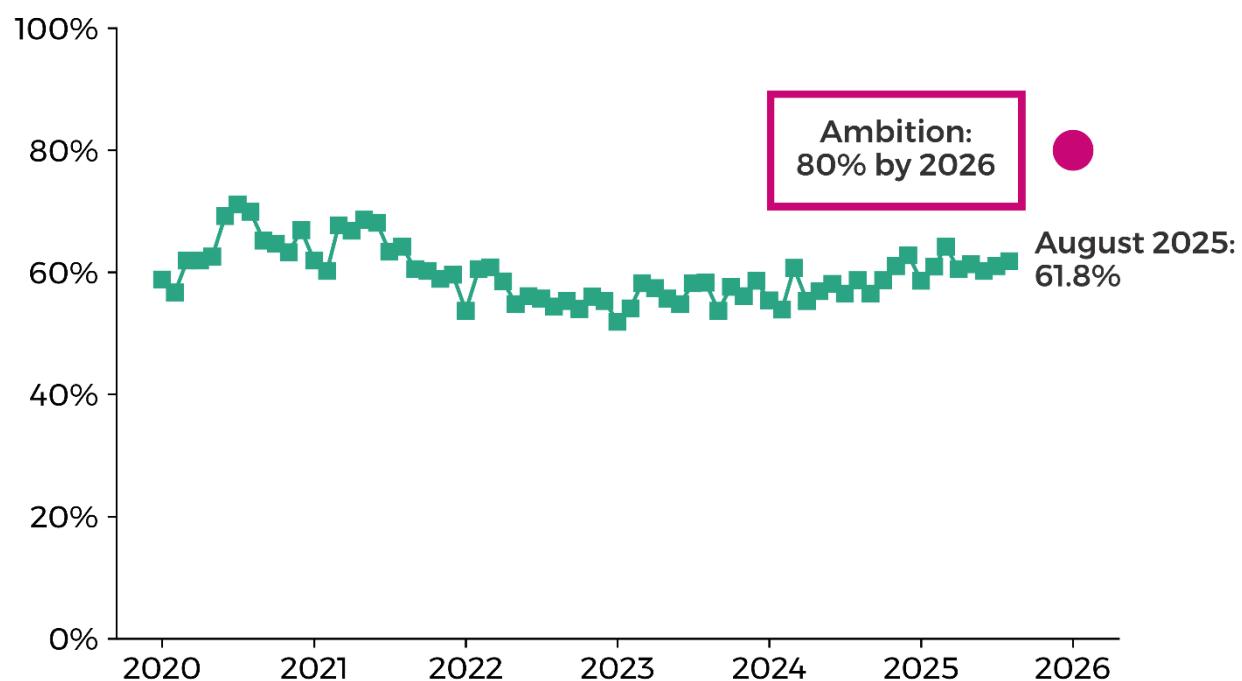
Recovery target 5: Cancer waiting times

Ambition 5: Cancer diagnosis and treatment to be undertaken within 62 days for 80% of people by 2026

Cancer waiting times in Wales remain a significant concern, with persistent challenges in meeting national targets for timely diagnosis and treatment. In August 2025, compliance stood at 61.8% - well below the Welsh Government's current target of 75% and 80% goal set for 2026.

As shown in Figure 7 below, performance against the SCP target has fluctuated between 50 and 60% in recent years.

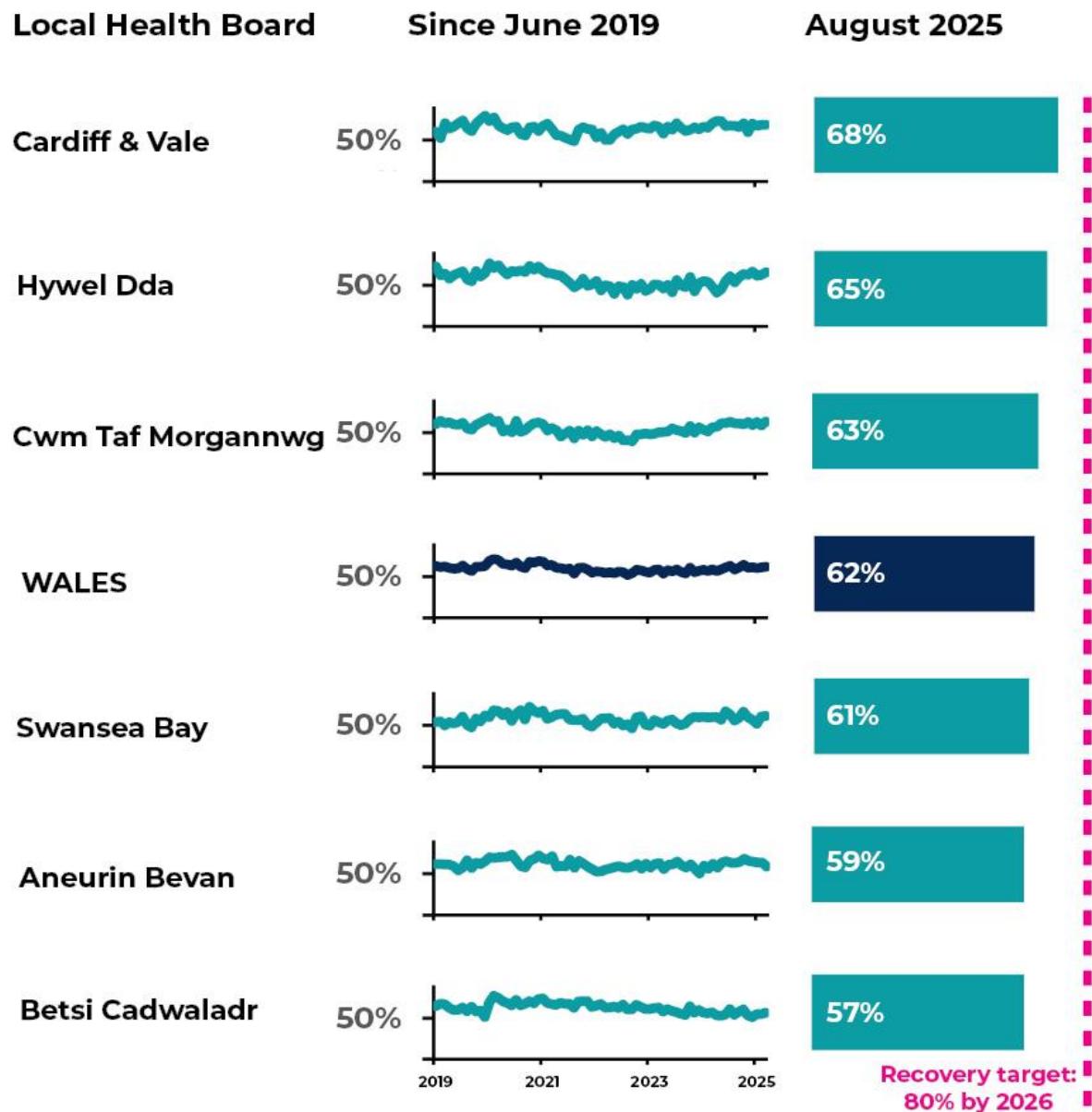
Figure 7: Percentage of people who received a cancer diagnosis and started their first definitive treatment within 62 days from the first point cancer was suspected



Source: StatsWales, [Suspected cancer pathway \(closed pathways\): The number of pathways where the patient started their first definitive treatment and those informed they do not have cancer by local health board, tumour site, age group, sex, measure and month](#)

Figure 8 below, shows the same data broken by health board. Of the six local health boards that provide cancer treatment, none have made substantial progress towards the 80% target in the last two years.

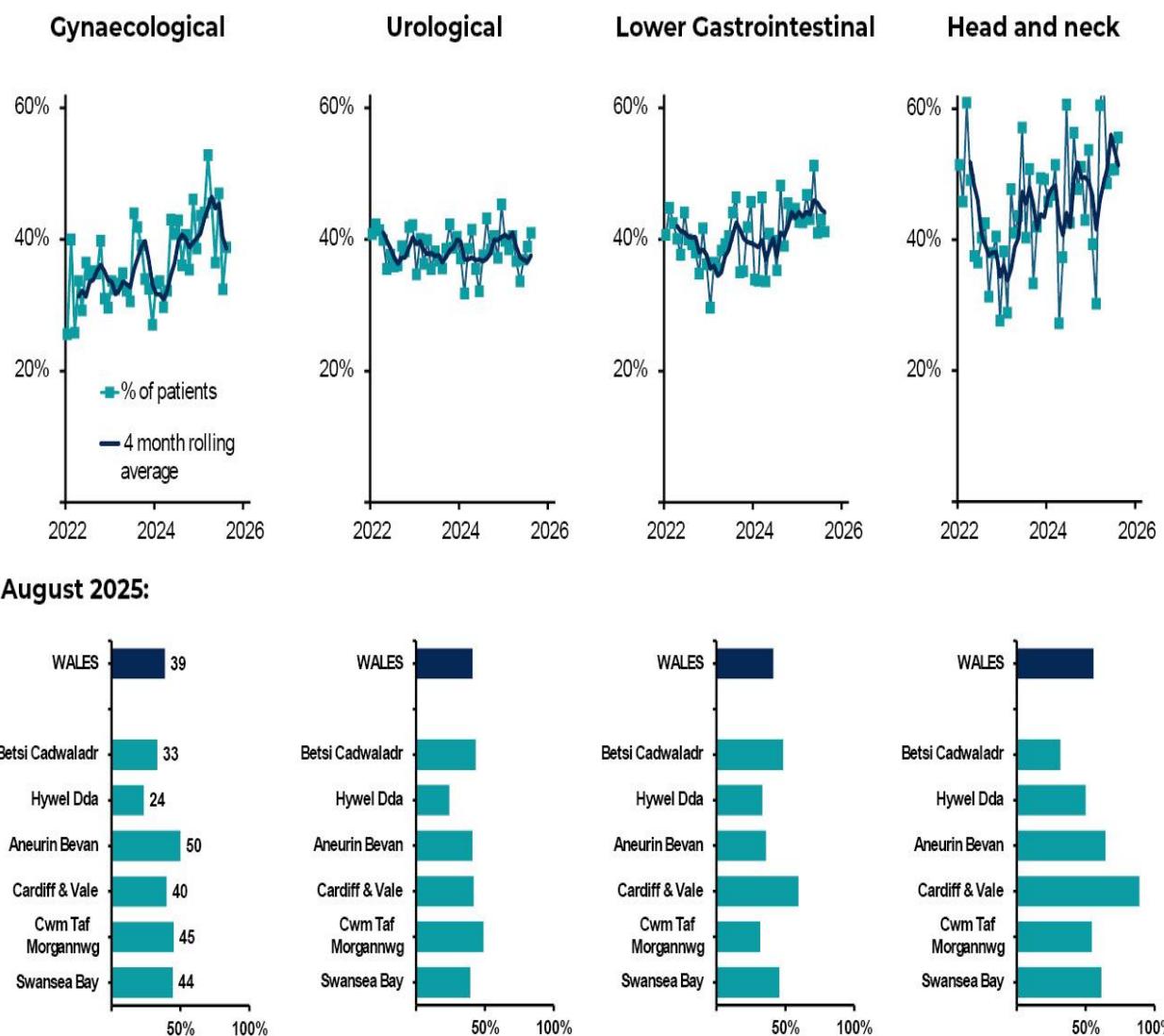
Figure 8: Percentage of people who received a cancer diagnosis and started their first definitive treatment within 62 days from the first point cancer was suspected, by Local Health Board



Source: StatsWales, [Suspected cancer pathway \(closed pathways\): The number of pathways where the patient started their first definitive treatment and those informed they do not have cancer by local health board, tumour site, age group, sex, measure and month](#)

Cancer waiting times also vary by certain cancer types. In August 2025, lowest compliance was for gynaecological cancers (39%); urological (41%) and lower gastrointestinal cancers (41%). Better performance can be found in children's cancer, brain/ central nervous system cancer, skin cancer, haematological cancer, and breast cancer.

Figure 9: Percentage of people who started their first definitive treatment within 62 days from the point cancer was first suspected, by Local Health Board for selected tumour sites



Source: StatsWales, [Suspected cancer pathway \(closed pathways\): The number of pathways where the patient started their first definitive treatment and those informed they do not have cancer by local health board, tumour site, age group, sex, measure and month](#)

Performance by health board

It is important to note that performance against recovery targets varies significantly across all health boards.

Based on the [August and September 2025 NHS Wales Activity and Performance Summary](#) and related government statements, the analysis below explores health board performance against selected planned care recovery targets and considers how its figures influence national outcomes.

As NHS Wales operates as a national system, recovery targets are set for all health boards. However, the data below suggests that focused intervention in areas facing the greatest challenges could help NHS Wales meet some recovery targets.

- **Reduce one-year waits for first outpatient appointments:** Just over 71,700 patient pathways in Wales are waiting more than one year for a first outpatient appointment. BCUHB accounts for the highest share of these long waits (39.0%), while Swansea Bay UHB and Powys THB have none. Hywel Dda UHB has less than 1% one-year waits for a first outpatient appointment. All other health boards are not currently meeting the performance target.
- **Eliminate two-year waits for treatment:** Nationally, just over 8,700 patient pathways are waiting more than two years for NHS treatment (an increase of 8.7% from July). BCUHB has the highest proportion of these waits (2.7% of its RTT pathways). In contrast, Swansea Bay UHB and Powys THB currently have no two-year waits.
- **Eliminate one -year waits for treatment:** BCUHB has the highest proportion of patient pathways waiting longer than one year for treatment (33.2%), while Powys has the lowest (<1%). Most other health boards still have significant numbers of patients waiting over one year, so the target is not yet achieved across Wales.
- **Diagnostics (Target: ≤8 weeks):** Just under 46,700 patient pathways are waiting longer than 8 weeks. Cardiff and Vale UHB has the highest breach rate at 56.6%, while Aneurin Bevan UHB has the lowest at 11.3% in August 2025.

- **Therapies (Target: ≤14 weeks):** In August 2025, just over 4,800 patient pathways breached the 14 week target (an increase of 11.1% from July). Hywel Dda UHB has the highest proportion waiting over 14 weeks (26.4%), while Swansea Bay UHB has no patient pathways waiting over 14 weeks.
- **Cancer (62-day target):** Cardiff and Vale UHB has the highest proportion of patients starting treatment within 62 days (68.4%), and Betsi Cadwaladr UHB the lowest (56.5%). National performance in August was 61.8%.

For more information, please contact:

Sarah Hatherley (Research Team Leader – Health and Social Policy)

Sarah.Hatherley@Senedd.Wales