

Correspondence from the Audit Scotland to the Public Audit Committee, dated 13 November 2013

Dear Convener

Waiting times at Accident and Emergency Departments

During my briefing to the Public Audit Committee on *NHS financial performance 2012/13* on 6 November 2013, I said that I would provide the committee with further detail about each NHS board's performance on waiting times at Accident and Emergency departments. This information is set out in the enclosed table and shows performance for the month ended March 2013, which was the month included in exhibit 15 of the report (page 36 - 37). Members also asked about NHS boards' performance at other times in the year, and performance since March 2013. The table also includes performance for the months ended September 2012, December 2012 and June 2013.

The national HEAT performance standard is that 98% of patients will wait less than 4 hours from arrival at an A&E department to admission, discharge or transfer. From April 2013, the Scottish Government introduced an additional interim HEAT target that 95% of patients will wait less than 4 hours from arrival at an A&E department to admission, discharge or transfer. This is due to be delivered by the year ending September 2014. The Scottish Government has said that this interim target is the first milestone to measure NHS boards' progress against achieving the 98% standard. This means that both the HEAT standard of 98% and the interim target of 95% currently apply.

The performance data in the table for the months up to and including March 2013 have been classified against the 98% HEAT standard. We have classified each NHS board's performance against the standard as met, not met, or performance was within 5% of the standard, (i.e. where a board achieved at least 93% but did not achieve 98%).

The performance data in the table for June 2013 have been classified against both the 95% interim HEAT target and the 98% standard. Once again, we have used the same classification. This means that NHS boards which achieved performance of 95% and over have been categorised as meeting the interim target, boards with between 90% and 95% performance have been categorised as within 5%, and boards with performance below 90% have been categorised as not meeting the interim target.

With your agreement, I would like to update the committee towards the end of the year on the planned 2014/15 programme of performance audits. In the meantime, the committee will wish to note the 2014/15 programme includes an audit on A&E departments' performance on waiting times, looking at progress since my predecessor published his report on Emergency Departments in August 2010. I anticipate publishing a report in spring 2014.

I hope this further detail is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Gardner
Auditor General for Scotland

Audit Scotland provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission

Table 1: NHS Accident and Emergency waiting times performance, September 2012 - June 2013

	Month ended Sept 2012		Month ended Dec 2012		Month ended March 2013		Month ended June 2013		
	% of patients admitted, discharged or transferred within 4 hours of arrival	Performance against HEAT standard (98%)	% of patients admitted, discharged or transferred within 4 hours of arrival	Performance against HEAT standard (98%)	% of patients admitted, discharged or transferred within 4 hours of arrival	Performance against HEAT standard (98%)	% of patients admitted, discharged or transferred within 4 hours of arrival	Performance against interim HEAT target (95%)	Performance against HEAT standard (98%)
NHS board									
Ayrshire & Arran	94.1%	Within 5%	87.8%	Not met	89.6%	Not met	92.8%	Within 5%	Not met
Borders	97.3%	Within 5%	94.9%	Within 5%	97.0%	Within 5%	99.3%	Met	Met
Dumfries & Galloway	93.1%	Within 5%	95.3%	Within 5%	94.0%	Within 5%	96.3%	Met	Within 5%
Fife	98.9%	Met	91.1%	Not met	96.9%	Within 5%	96.5%	Met	Within 5%
Forth Valley	91.7%	Not met	85.8%	Not met	87.6%	Not met	94.6%	Within 5%	Within 5%
Grampian	97.5%	Within 5%	94.5%	Within 5%	95.2%	Within 5%	98.3%	Met	Met
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	95.1%	Within 5%	90.4%	Not met	89.6%	Not met	91.7%	Within 5%	Not met

Highland	97.9%	Within 5%	97.8%	Within 5%	97.5%	Within 5%	98.0%	Met	Met
Lanarkshire	91.2%	Not met	84.4%	Not met	91.8%	Not met	92.6%	Within 5%	Not met
Lothian	92.6%	Not met	86.2%	Not met	88.1%	Not met	94.6%	Within 5%	Within 5%
Orkney	98.8%	Met	98.6%	Met	98.6%	Met	98.2%	Met	Met
Shetland	98.7%	Met	98.8%	Met	99.5%	Met	99.1%	Met	Met
Tayside	99.2%	Met	98.4%	Met	98.7%	Met	99.2%	Met	Met
Western Isles	98.5%	Met	98.3%	Met	98.9%	Met	97.9%	Met	Within 5%
Scotland total	95.0%	Within 5%	90.3%	Not met	91.9%	Not met	94.6%	Within 5%	Within 5%

Source: ISD Scotland