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8th September 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

Need NHS treatment? You're better off up North!

Analysis of NHS England data by the Medical Technology Group reveals huge regional variation in patients receiving treatment

There is huge regional variation in the number of patients receiving NHS treatment in England, with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in the North performing significantly better than those in the South, according to analysis of NHS England data by the Medical Technology Group.

The number of patients receiving NHS treatment in June 2021 ranged from 2.52 per 1,000 population in Wirral CCG to 8.77 per 1,000 population in Wakefield CCG, over three times higher.

The best performing region was the Northeast which treated 5.37 patients per 1,000 population, compared to 3.38 in London and 4.14 in the East. Of the 10 best performing CCGs, 7 were in the North, while 8 of the 10 worst performing CCGs were in the Midlands and South. The data suggest that patients in the north of England are more likely to receive access to treatment than those in the South.

There was improvement across most CCGs in June, with 99 of 106 reporting an increase in the number of patients treated compared with the previous month. Kirklees CCG reported the greatest increase, treating 92 percent more patients between May and June this year. The Midlands and East improved by 17 percent and 16 percent respectively, while the Southeast and Southwest increased at a lower rate, 13 percent and 8.5 per cent.

The figures reveal that the NHS in England is treating significantly fewer patients than before the Covid-19 pandemic, however. A comparison found that 242,293 people received treatment in July 2021, nearly 22,000 fewer (-8%) than the same period in 2019 (264,108). The data show that the NHS still needs to make significant progress to address the waiting list of 5.45 million people in June 2021 and return to pre-pandemic levels.

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The study also exposes increases in waiting times across all regions in June. Patients in the East - the worst performing region - were waiting on average 22 weeks for treatment, an increase of 10.6 weeks compared with May. The Northwest saw the smallest increase of 4.8 weeks, with patients waiting on average 14.5 weeks for treatment, slightly below the national average of 14.8 weeks.

Barbara Harpham, Chair of the Medical Technology Group, said, "The regional disparities that were present before the Covid pandemic - resulting from arbitrary decision-making from Commissioners - have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

"All patients, no matter where they live, deserve the same access to diagnostic tests and interventions. Everyone needs to be treated fairly and equitably as the NHS battles to recover from the enormous impact of Covid.

"We urge NHS England to agree to a post-Covid patient charter that ensures rapid access to treatment and no arbitrary restrictions so patients are certain of the service they will receive."

The MTG is proposing a five-point post-Covid NHS Standard: Patient Charter including:

- Rapid access to treatment and information on waiting times.
- No arbitrary restrictions, such as weight or pain thresholds.
- Effective appeals if a treatment is not given or a patient is not happy with their care.
- A choice of treatment and location, with existing rights upheld.
- A patient say on prioritisation decisions and on regional NHS Boards.

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For media enquiries, and data, please contact:
The Medical Technology Group, Colin Hallmark or Sarah Carter
0207 736 1888 / mtg@3nine.co.uk

Methodology

Monthly Referral to Treatment (RTT) data for completed admitted pathways by Clinical Commissioning Groups in June 2021, published by NHS England on 12th August, was compared with the same data from May and April 2021 (published on 8th July and 10th June 2021 respectively). A comparison of the equivalent data from July 2019 provided a pre-Covid comparison.

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Consultant-led Referral To Treatment (RTT) waiting times are released monthly, and monitor the length of time from referral through to elective treatment.

The data used was the total number of completed admitted pathways across all treatment functions within the relevant month. To understand the relative increase of productivity across CCGs, the number of patients treated per 1,000 of the population was calculated.

The ten best performing CCGs in June 2021 were:

CCG	Region	No. of patients treated per 1,000 population (June 21)	Percentage change on May 21 (%)
NHS Wakefield	North East and Yorkshire	8.77	32
NHS Dorset	South West	7.26	9
NHS St Helens	North West	7.2	12
NHS Stafford and Surrounds	Midlands	7.17	10
NHS Tameside and Glossop	North West	6.93	18
NHS Blackpool	North West	6.74	18
NHS North Tyneside	North East and Yorkshire	6.61	-22
NHS Northumberland	North East and Yorkshire	6.47	11
NHS Cannock Chase	Midlands	6.21	21
NHS Bradford District and Craven	North East and Yorkshire	6.16	16

The worst ten performing CCGs in June 2021 were:

CCG	Region	No. of patients treated per 1,000 population (June 21)	Percentage change on May 21 (%)
NHS Herts Valleys	East	3.35	10
NHS Vale of York	North East and Yorkshire	3.30	17
NHS East and North Hertfordshire	East	3.17	10
NHS North East London	London	3.14	15
NHS Stoke on Trent	Midlands	3.11	18
NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin	Midlands	2.93	13
NHS Birmingham and Solihull	Midlands	2.91	18
NHS West Essex	East	2.84	23
NHS North Central London	London	2.79	20
NHS Wirral	North West	2.52	17

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About the Medical Technology Group

The Medical Technology Group (MTG) is a coalition of patient groups, research charities and medical device manufacturers working to make medical technologies available to everyone who needs them. Uptake of medical technology in the UK is not as good as it should be, given its great potential to provide value for money to the NHS, patients and taxpayers. The MTG believes that patients and clinicians need better information about medical technologies so that they can make informed choices about their medical care.

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