

Quarterly substance misuse statistics in Wales

Background

What are these statistics?

These substance misuse statistics present the activity from the Welsh National Database for Substance Misuse (WNDSM). Activity is summarised in terms of referral activity within the period and any assessment, treatment or closure information which has occurred.

Knowledge and Analytical Services updates published StatsWales tables on a quarterly basis and NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) produces a detailed treatment services report annually which is then published on Welsh Government Substance Misuse website.

Source of the data

The statistics are collated from the Welsh National Database for Substance Misuse (WNDSM). The WNDSM database contains details of all referrals to Drug and Alcohol treatment service providers in Wales and is held by NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS).

The overall management of the system, including advice on enhancements to the database, national performance issues linked to the data and the analysis of other routinely collected data has been previously overseen by the National Management Information Board. In 2014-15 this function was taken over by the Data Information and Analysis Board (DIAB).

Coverage

All substance misuse treatment service providers in Wales that are in receipt of Welsh Government funding via the Area Planning Boards, which are co-terminous with the Health Boards, are required to comply with the reporting requirements of the database.

The data relates only to people presenting to treatment service providers and may constitute only a proportion of all substance misusers.

Users and uses

The aim of these statistics is to present data which has been collected by treatment service providers and derived from their own clinical and administrative data in an accessible format providing a statistical summary of the community dental service across Wales.

These statistics will be useful both within and outside the Welsh Government. We believe the key users of substance misuse statistics in Wales are:

- Ministers and their advisors;
- Assembly Members and Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- Substance Misuse Treatment service providers;
- Communities and Local Government;
- Local government unitary authorities (elected members and officials);
- Students, academics and universities;
- Other areas of the Welsh Government;
- Other government departments; and
- Individual citizens and private companies.

The statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of the uses include:

- Advice to Ministers;
- To assess treatment services performance against targets;
- To inform service improvement projects for areas of focus and opportunities for quality improvement

If you are a user and do not feel the above list adequately covers you, or if you would like to be added to our circulation list, please let us know by e-mailing stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

Strengths and Limitations of the data

Strengths

- Detailed statistics are provided via our StatsWales website
- Tables have a clear focus on Wales and have been developed to meet the internal and external user need in Wales. They aim to contribute to the statistical context for current policy in the area of substance misuse services in Wales and address the need for regular updates to several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- The information is processed and published regularly and in an ordered manner to enable users to see the statistics when they are current and of greatest interest.
- Efficient use has been made of administrative data sources to produce tables.

Limitations

- The StatsWales information is intended for a more informed audience, with little explanation to enable other users to interpret the data appropriately.
- Because of the devolved administrations and differing policy, there is less scope for direct UK comparisons (see 'Comparability' later in the document).

- The database is dynamic i.e. records are subject to amendment as further information is submitted by treatment service providers. This means that current figures are not directly comparable previous figures (see Revisions sections below).

Data processing cycle

Data collection

For the Quarterly statistics Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS), Welsh Government, requests a WNDSM extract from NWIS prior to the publication of the quarterly StatsWales tables.

Validation and verification

Data is submitted on Excel spreadsheets from the NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) via secure web data transfer. Validation checks are carried out by the data provider and the data is further checked on receipt, any inconsistencies are then queried with data providers. Routine meetings between Welsh Government and NWIS provide an opportunity for further discussion of information issues and are utilised as required.

Validation of data at source for treatment service providers has been introduced, which includes immediate feedback on data quality, validation, load errors and consistency checks on their data at the time of submission to the national database. Training for all treatment service providers in the validation at source process has also been supplied, which has improved the data quality submitted to the database.

Publication

The statistics published by Knowledge and Analytical Services on StatsWales are produced from the data source described above.

Key quality information

Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) adhere to a quality strategy and this is in line with Principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Specifically, the list below provides information according to the European Statistical System's six dimensions of quality.

Relevance

On our '[About Statistics and Research](#)' pages we provide background to our statistics and information for users. We encourage users of the statistics to contact us to let us know how they use the data.

We consult with key users prior to making changes, and where possible publicise changes on the internet, at committees and other networks to consult with users more widely. We aim to respond quickly to policy changes to ensure our statistics remain relevant.

Accuracy

The database is dynamic, that is, records are subject to amendment as further information is submitted by treatment service providers. This means that figures from the previous periods will

inevitably be revised and this should be considered when interpreting the data. Consequently the first time data is published for a specific period it will be marked as 'provisional'. Openings and closings of treatment service providers, the number of treatment service providers submitting data are monitored and the revisions which treatment service providers make are also monitored quarter to quarter.

Please note the latest quarter tends to have a higher number of open records in comparison with previous quarters as fewer updates to the records have been received, and treatment service providers keep records open for up to 6 weeks before closing them if the client does not attend.

Our StatsWales tables include metadata which provides key quality information on coverage, timing and geography.

In the unlikely event of incorrect data being published, revisions would be made and users informed in conjunction with the Welsh Government's [Revisions, errors and postponements arrangements](#).

Revision of data in 2014

Statistics relating to the period covering up to January to March 2014 were originally published on 26 August 2014 but withdrawn on the 1 October 2014 due to data quality issues.

These quality issues arose from 1 April 2014 during the process of populating a new events-based database, which was recommended following a review of substance misuse treatment data. This resulted in both duplicated records and missing treatment information. It is likely that these errors resulted in an over-statement of the percentage of treatments starting within 20 working days.

NWIS took steps to resolve these issues including:

- All treatment service providers resubmitted their open records in April 2014 in order to ensure that NWIS had a complete and accurate record of all records showing on the treatment service providers' local systems.
- NWIS and treatment service providers undertook a data quality exercise where all treatment service providers were sent back their activity levels and were asked to confirm whether the activity showed an accurate reflection of their workload.
- NWIS worked with the treatment service providers in order to identify where the errors were and assisted them in resolving any issues.
- Validation at source was introduced which included immediate feedback on data quality, validation, load errors and consistency checks on their data at the time of submission to the national database.
- Training for all treatment service providers in the validation at source process, which has improved the data quality and reduced the number of invalid codes submitted to the database.

Revised quarterly statistics were published on 5th August 2015, following a period where no quarterly updates were made.

Revision of data in 2016

The process for producing the release was that the first time each quarter's data was published it was marked as 'provisional' and as 'revised' at the next update. From the reintroduction of the quarterly statistics in August 2015, further updates to the quarterly StatsWales tables have been made, as follows:

- Reintroduction in August 2015: the quarter from October to December 2014 and previous quarters from January to March 2013 were updated
- Later in August 2015, the quarter from January to March 2015 was updated
- In November 2015, the quarter from April to June 2015 was updated
- In February 2016, the quarter from July to September 2015 was updated
- In May 2016, the quarter from October to December 2015 was updated
- In August 2016, the quarter from January to March 2016 was updated

During 2016 it became apparent that further revisions were being made by treatment service providers to the data after the data was being published as 'revised' and therefore final. A data quality review was conducted to check the impact of these further revisions on key statistics.

Data quality review: KAS used data provided by NWIS to investigate these further revisions to the data by treatment service providers, looking at the size and impact of these revisions on the following:

- Referrals
- Assessments
- Treatment starts
- Percentage treated within 20 working days
- Closures
- Percentage planned closures

The review highlighted that the data is revised even after three quarters and mostly upwards for referrals, assessments, treatment starts and case closures and it seems that undercounting was occurring in the data in the release schedule. The percentage planned closures and percentage treated within 20 working days increased for some quarters and decreased for others. NWIS also suggested that the closures are likely to change at the end of each financial year as treatment service providers review their data.

The results of the quality review were presented to the Data Information and Analysis Board (DIAB) for Substance Misuse on 13 September 2016. Members of the Board were asked to discuss the revisions to the quarterly substance misuse data and make a decision regarding the release schedule. The board advised that additional revisions should be introduced with the quarterly statistics being revised 4 quarters back, the equivalent of a year's data. Consequently, in the November 2016 release, for April to June 2016, the data was revised for each quarter from quarter April to June 2015. Additionally, as a one-off change to the new revision process, data from January to March 2014 onwards was revised with the latest data that we hold for these quarters.

Revised quarterly statistics, incorporating the longer revision period, were published on 30th November 2016.

Timeliness and punctuality

All outputs adhere to the Code of Practice by pre-announcing the date of publication through the Upcoming calendar. Furthermore, should the need arise to postpone an output this would follow the Welsh Government's [Revisions, errors and postponements](#) arrangements.

We publish releases as soon as practical after the relevant time period. The Substance misuse StatsWales tables are updated quarterly in November, February, May and August. The data suppliers, NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS), provide the data to Welsh Government approximately 4 months after the end of the quarter to be published and approximately a month before the data is to be released by Welsh Government. The data in the quarterly StatsWales tables is therefore from the time period 5 months prior to the release date.

Treatment service providers submit monthly data to NWIS usually around the 9th to the 11th of the month and the refresh of the data in NWIS usually takes place around the 20th to the 22nd of the month. Data is available for extraction from the 22nd of each month.

Accessibility and clarity

A link to the statistics is published in an accessible, orderly, pre-announced manner on the Welsh Government website at 9:30am on the day of publication. An RSS feed alerts registered users to this publication. We also publicise our outputs on Twitter.

The statistics are updated on the StatsWales website and this can be manipulated online or downloaded into spreadsheets for use offline.

We aim to use Plain English in our outputs and all outputs adhere to the Welsh Government's accessibility policy. Furthermore, all our headlines are published in Welsh and English.

All of the data provided is published on our interactive website [StatsWales](#).

Comparability and coherence

Where there are changes to the data provided, this is shown clearly in the outputs. Where advance warning is known of future changes these will be pre-announced in accordance with Welsh Government arrangements.

Substance misuse statistics for other UK nations are published and available from the links below, however this data is not directly comparable:

England: [NHS Digital website](#)

Scotland:Public [Health Information for Scotland website](#)

Northern Ireland: [Department of Health website](#)

Every year the data are all collected from the same sources and adhere to the national standard.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being 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 Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

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 well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The statistics are available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Substance-Misuse>

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

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