First for Wales as diagnostic and therapy waiting times are published

Wales became the first UK country to publish diagnostic and therapy waiting times today. Commenting on the figures Health Minister Dr Brian Gibbons stressed how important these waiting times were in reaching the waiting times targets set for 2009.

Dr Gibbons said: "Publishing these figures today shows our commitment and determination to make sure no-one in Wales is waiting unacceptably long periods of time for diagnostic or therapy tests. These waiting times are often referred to as hidden waiting times. By publishing them for everyone to see we are being honest about the challenge we face and showing how we will tackle them.

"When Improving Health in Wales was published in January 2001 we gave a commitment to publish diagnostic and therapy waiting times. Since then much work has been done to develop a robust system which would give us accurate data. The figures show that over 85% of patients have been waiting less than 36 weeks to access investigations and therapy services which is the target to be fully achieved by March 2007.

"There is already much work underway to reduce long diagnostic and therapy waits which include a diagnostic and therapy strategy. We have also made available £80m for the NHS to help them achieve all waiting times targets. Numbers in training have risen significantly since 2000/01 with the numbers in speech and language therapy rising by 66%, occupational therapy rising by 54% and physiotherapists by 41%. These increases will help us to get the staff needed into the NHS to carry out the tests needed.

"I am more than aware of the work that needs to be done to bring these waiting times down. NHS staff have shown their commitment to delivering first class health services with the huge reductions we've seen in inpatient and outpatient waiting times. I'm confident that they will continue with this hard work to do the same with diagnostic and therapy services."

Notes:

The waiting times can be found at:

http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/content/latest.htm

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