

Social Care Eligibility Criteria and Waiting Times, Scotland, 2020-21

May 2022

Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
1. Data gaps and future plans	4
2. New clients	5
2.1 New clients receiving a community care assessment	5
2.2 New personal care clients.....	7
3. Waiting times	8
3.1 Time between first contact and completion of assessment	8
3.2 Time between completion of assessment and service delivery.....	9
4. Background information	11
4.1 Data sources.....	11
4.2 Understanding the statistics in this report.....	11
Time period.....	11
Eligibility criteria	11
Waiting times	12
4.3 Glossary.....	12
4.4 Limitations of the data.....	13
5. Data at a local authority level	14
6. Non-Official Statistics	15
Correspondence and enquiries.....	15
How to access background or source data.....	15
Complaints and suggestions.....	15
Crown Copyright	15

Executive summary

Due to data completeness, trends are based on the Local Authorities responding every year, so are for indicative purposes only and do not necessarily reflect national trends. See the [Limitations of the data section](#) for more information.

New clients receiving a community care assessment

- Rates of community care assessments for new older clients (65 and over) in the 16 local authorities responding every year, peaked in 2020 and then declined in 2021.
- Rates of younger clients (aged 18 to 64) receiving a community care assessment was considerably lower, less than 1 per 1,000 population, than for older people.

Clients receiving a new personal care service

- Rates of older clients (aged 65 and over) receiving a new personal care service increased, from 6.8 per 1,000 population in 2012, to a peak of 10.1 in 2018, before falling back to 6.7 in 2021 (Based on 15 local authorities).
- Rates of younger clients (aged 18 to 64) recorded as being new personal clients was considerably lower, less than 1 per 1,000 population, than for older people (Based on 20 local authorities).

Waiting times

- In 2020, there was a rise in the percentage of all adults waiting more than six weeks between first contact and completion of a community care assessment (Based on 14 local authorities).
- The percentage of younger clients in all eligibility criteria categories receiving a personal care service in less than two weeks, declined from 68% in 2019 to 56% in 2021 (Based on 20 local authorities).

Introduction

This publication presents the latest information on:

- new clients meeting local eligibility criteria for social care support or new personal care services in Scotland,
- waiting times between first contact with services and the completion of a community care assessment,
- waiting times between completion of a community care assessment and delivery of personal care services.

The data collected provides important information to the Scottish Government and Local Authorities (LAs) on the extent of new demand for social care services. This information helps monitor the target of providing personal care to adults assessed as having critical or substantial needs within six weeks of their assessment, as well as that for Local Authorities who have a duty to assess any adult who appears to need community care services Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (“the 1968 Act”).

The Eligibility categories – Critical, Substantial, Moderate, and Low Risk – are defined in the national framework guidance on [National Eligibility Criteria and Waiting Times for the Personal and Nursing Care of Older People](#) issued jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA on 28 September 2009. The category of “No Risk” is used for people who are assessed as not coming under the definitions for any of the four eligibility categories, and “Not available” is used when the eligibility category is not known. The Eligibility Criteria consider both (a) the severity of the risks and (b) the urgency for intervention to respond to the risks. The categories were initially developed for older people but were extended to all adults with the [extension of free personal care](#) in April 2019.

The national framework recognises that local authorities should set local eligibility criteria for access to personal and nursing care services. Local eligibility criteria indicate what level of need councils and their partners recognise as requiring services. In setting such criteria, local authorities will consider a range of factors including the overall level of resources available to meet need, the cost of service provision and ensuring equity in their service decisions. Eligibility criteria are a method for deploying limited resources in a way that ensures that those resources are targeted to those in greatest need, while also recognising the types of low level intervention that can be made to halt the deterioration of people in less urgent need of services. As such, there may be variation in the levels of service and delivery of services across local authorities.

1. Data gaps and future plans

This is the first report produced to aid the understanding of the annually published data tables for Eligibility Criteria and Waiting Times. Data up to 2018 were available in Excel table format only, and data from 2019 to 2021 are included in this release.

The data submitted on Eligibility Criteria and Waiting Times has significant gaps, as many local authorities have not been able to submit the data. As such, there is no Scotland-level trend available, but we report on the local authorities that have responded to each data table within the collection every year, from 2012 to 2021. For further details on specific local authorities, please see the accompanying dataset.

Many Local Authorities have reported difficulty in providing the information asked for in this data collection, which has had a significant impact on the robustness of the information available for analysis. We have been working with Public Health Scotland (PHS) to discuss the future of this data and are developing plans to capture waiting times data within existing Social Care collections returned to PHS, making it more straightforward for partnerships to provide data, and in turn resulting in more complete and consistent data in the future. This will therefore be the penultimate release of this data by Scottish Government using the existing collection format. If you have any queries or concerns about this proposed change, please contact us at swstat@gov.scot.

2. New clients

2.1 New clients receiving a community care assessment

Sixteen local authorities provided eligibility criteria data on new clients aged 65 and over, recorded as being new to social work services and who received a community care assessment in the quarter, every year from 2012 to 2021.

As shown in Figure 1, the rate for new clients aged 65 and over remained stable, between 9 and 10 per 1,000 population from 2013 to 2019. In 2020, there was a rise to 11.1 new older clients per 1,000 population, and then a decline to 8.0 in 2021.

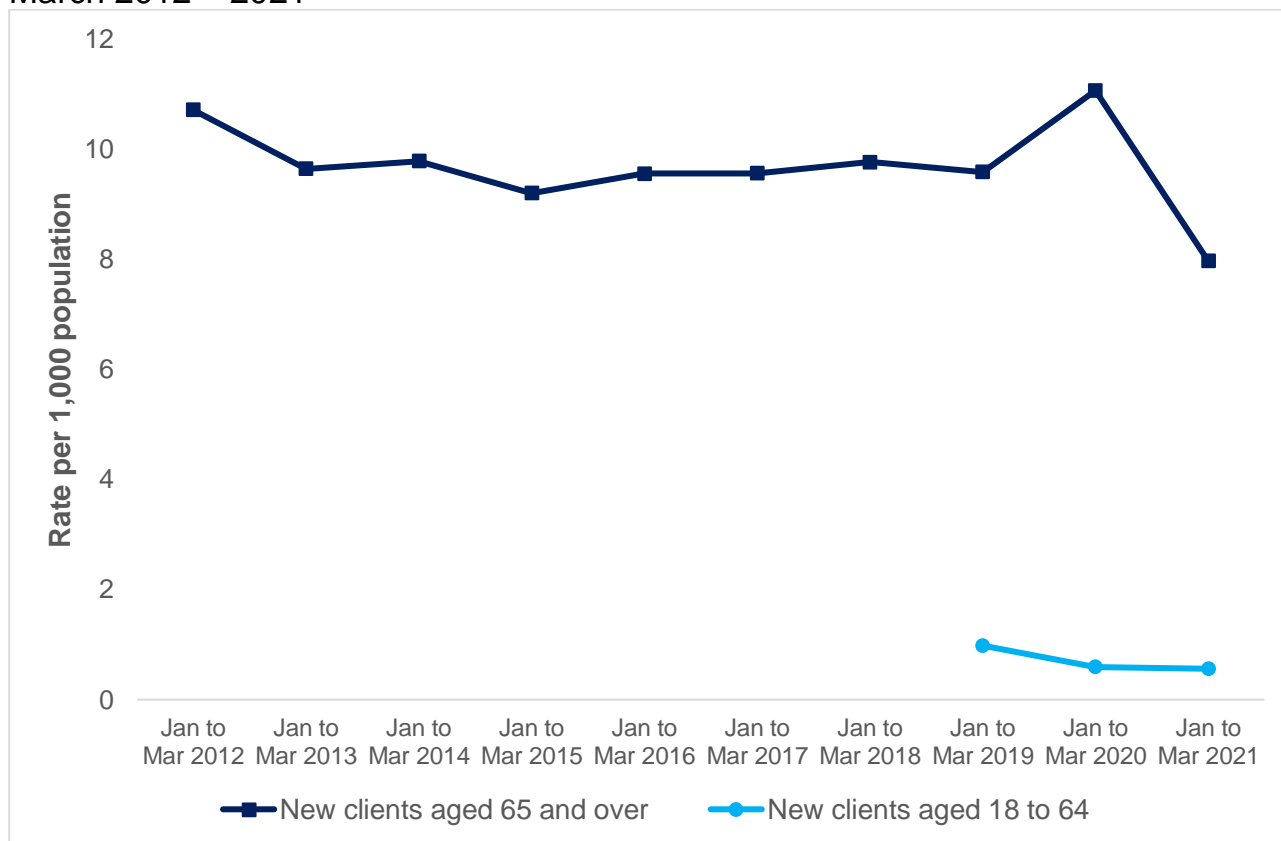
From 2019 onwards, the Scottish Government Quarterly Monitoring Return also collected data on younger adults (aged 18 to 64), reflecting the extension of free personal care to all adults.

Nineteen local authorities submitted eligibility criteria and assessment data every year (2019 to 2021) for younger adults (aged 18 to 64). The rate per 1,000 population for younger adults was considerably lower than for older people, at less than 1 per 1,000 population. The rate remained relatively stable over the three years.

See accompanying dataset for additional data by local authority.

Figure 1. Rates of community care assessments for new older clients (65 and over) in local authorities responding every year peaked in 2020 and then declined in 2021

Rate of new clients receiving a community care assessment in the quarter, in local authorities that responded every year from 2012 to 2021, Scotland, January to March 2012 – 2021



Source: Scottish Government Quarterly Monitoring Return

Notes:

1. For clients aged 65 and over, 16 local authorities responded every year between 2012 and 2021, and for clients aged 18 to 64, 19 local authorities responded. Please see data completeness in the accompanying dataset for which local authorities are included.
2. Population rate is based on populations from LAs returning data (NRS mid-year population estimates up to 2020).

The data indicates a decline in community care assessments for new clients from 2020 to 2021. This follows increases in expenditure on adult social care ([LFR 03](#)), by Integration Joint Boards and Local Authorities, and no national tightening of the eligibility criteria for an assessment.

A range of factors may have affected these trends, including: an increasingly ageing population, resources becoming more focused on those in greatest need, geography, poverty, health inequalities and local government decision making.

Some reduction in numbers may also reflect substitution of formal services with asset based approaches (e.g. community alarms, telecare and modifications to a client's home) and increased use of self-directed support options.

2.2 New personal care clients

This data includes clients with a relevant personal care service start date in the reporting period. Personal care services include:

- personal care at home (including intermediate care e.g. rapid response, crisis care but, for the purposes of this measure, excludes telecare, equipment and adaptations and nursing services provided by the NHS),
- personal and nursing care in a care home,
- Direct Payments / Self Directed Support provided for personal care needs.

Unlike the new clients receiving a community care assessment above ([Section 2.1: New clients receiving an assessment](#)), these clients don't need to be new to Social Care services and may already have another service, such as telecare or meals service.

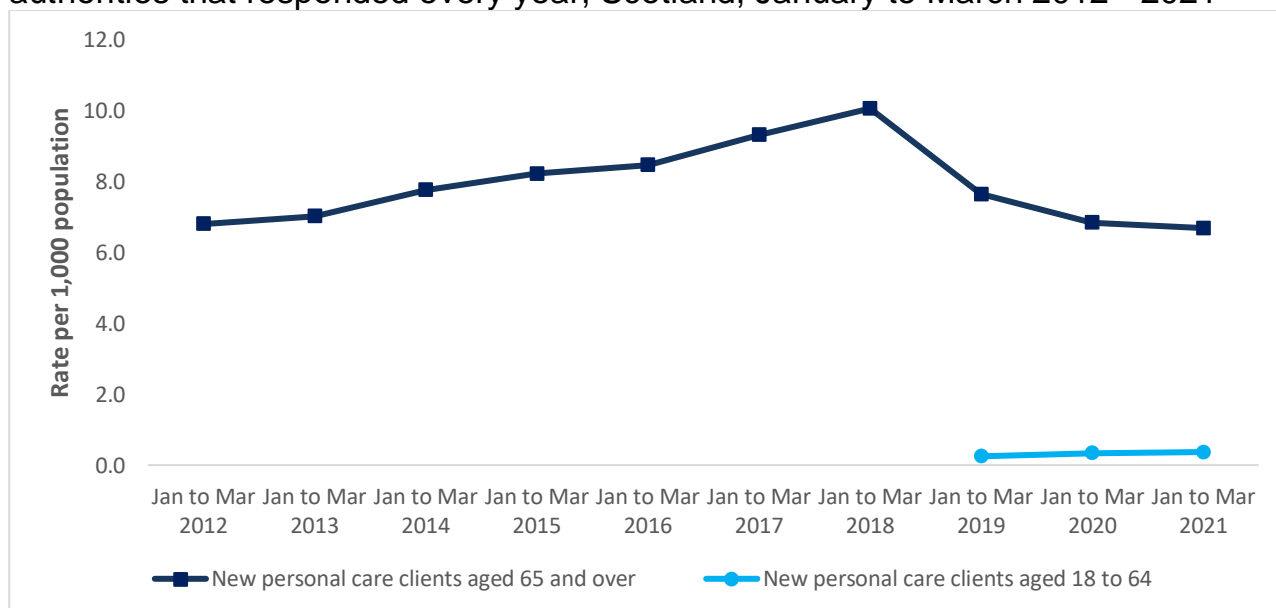
As shown in Figure 2, for the 15 local authorities which submitted data each year on older clients (aged 65 and over), the rate increased from 6.8 per 1,000 population in 2012 to a peak of 10.1 in 2018, before falling back to 6.7 in 2021.

For the 20 local authorities which submitted data on younger clients each year, the rate per 1,000 population was considerably lower than for older people, at less than 1 per 1,000 population, but remained stable from 2019 to 2021.

See accompanying dataset for additional data by local authority.

Figure 2. Rates of new personal care clients receiving a new service have declined since 2018 for older people (aged 65 and over)

Rate of new personal care clients receiving a new service in the quarter in local authorities that responded every year, Scotland, January to March 2012 - 2021



Source: Scottish Government Quarterly Monitoring Return

Notes:

1. For clients aged 65 and over, 15 local authorities responded every year between 2012 and 2021, and for clients aged 18 to 64, 20 local authorities responded. Please see data completeness in the accompanying dataset for which local authorities are included.
2. Scotland population rate is based on populations from LA's returning data (NRS mid-year population estimates up to 2020).

3. Waiting times

3.1 Time between first contact and completion of assessment

The time interval for new clients, from first contact to completion of a community care assessment, is recorded for each of the eligibility categories ([Section 2.1: New clients receiving an assessment](#)). As part of the development of the National Care Service (NCS), Scottish Government has committed to the overhaul of the current mechanism of eligibility criteria.

Scottish Government and COSLA will remove eligibility criteria in their current form by moving away from a focus on risk and instead focusing on enabling people to access the care and support that they need to lead a full life. This will mean significantly changing the way care and support services are designed, so that prevention and early intervention is prioritised and people can move easily between different types of care and support as their needs change.

This data provides insight into the variation across Scotland and will inform any future decisions on a possible national standard.

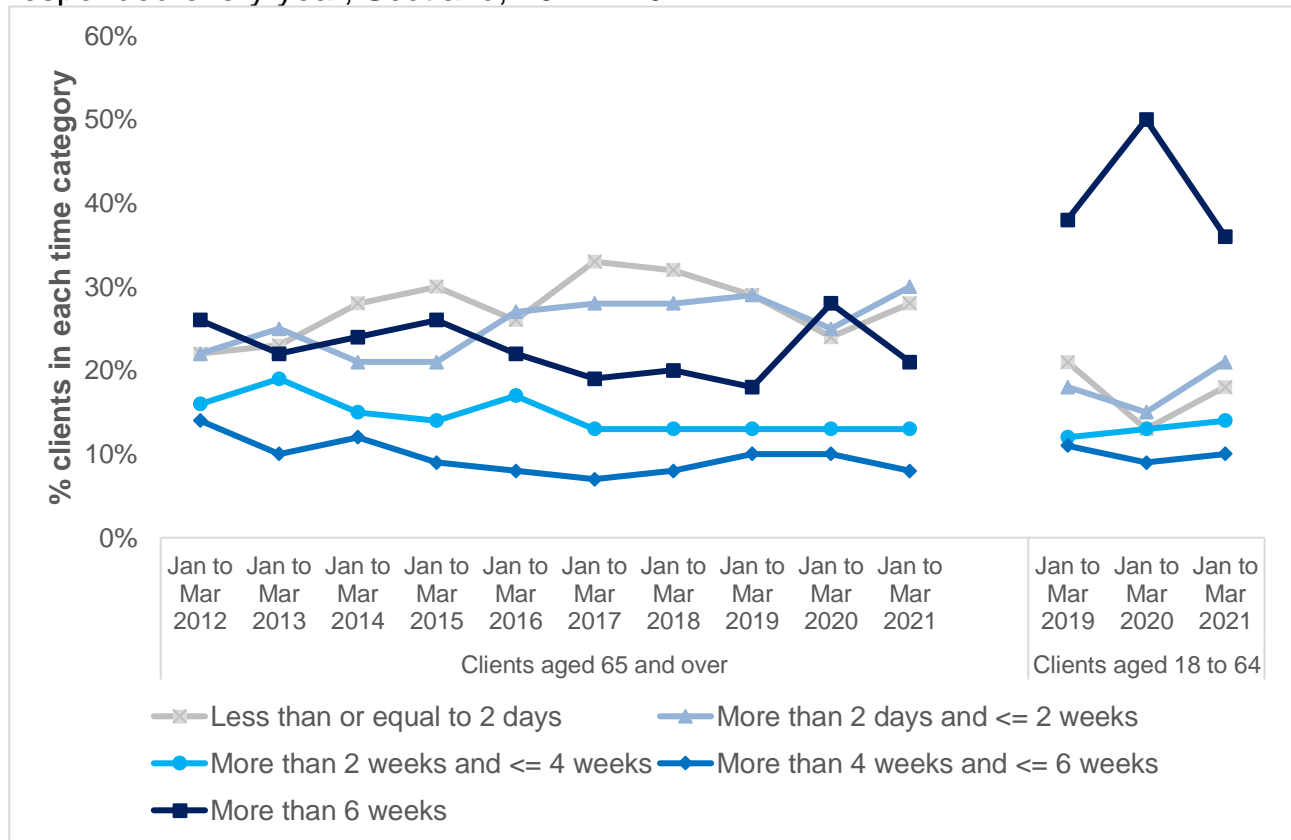
As shown in Figure 3, for the 16 local authorities that submitted data each year on older clients (aged 65 and over) there was a decline in the percentage, from 26% in 2012 to 18% in 2019, waiting more than six weeks. In 2020, there was a peak of 28% of older clients, and subsequent decline to 21% in 2021, waiting for more than six weeks. The peak in 2020 coincides with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions brought in to protect vulnerable people, and there is a corresponding decline, to 49% in 2020, of the percentage of older clients receiving care within two weeks.

For the 19 local authorities which submitted data on younger clients each year (aged 18 to 64), the waiting times show similar trends to that of older clients, with a peak of 50% of younger clients waiting more than six weeks in 2020, and corresponding decline, to 28% of younger clients receiving care within two weeks. In 2021, the percentage of clients waiting more than six weeks fell to 36%, whereas the percentage waiting less than two weeks increased to 39%.

See accompanying dataset for local authority data and to determine which local authorities responded every year.

Figure 3. In 2020 there is a rise in the proportion of all adults waiting more than six weeks between first contact and completion of a community care assessment

Time intervals recorded for clients in the all eligibility criteria category between first contact and completion of a community care assessment, in local authorities that responded every year, Scotland, 2012 - 2021



Source: Scottish Government Quarterly Monitoring Return

Notes:

1. For clients aged 65 and over, 16 local authorities responded every year between 2012 and 2021, and for clients aged 18 to 64, 19 local authorities responded. Please see data completeness in the accompanying dataset for which local authorities.

3.2 Time between completion of assessment and service delivery

The time interval from completion of a community care assessment to delivery of a relevant service for new personal care clients is recorded for each of the eligibility categories (detailed in [Section 2.2: New Personal Care clients](#)). This data is used to monitor the [six week waiting time target](#) to deliver Personal Care for all adults (from 2019 onwards, previously only older clients aged 65 and over) who have been assessed in the critical or substantial needs categories.

As shown in Figure 4, for the 15 local authorities which submitted data each year on older clients (aged 65 and over) there has been a steady increase in the percentage, from 3% in 2013 to 19% in 2020, waiting more than six weeks for service delivery. There is a corresponding decline in the percentage of older clients receiving service delivery in less than or equal to two weeks from 70% in 2013 to

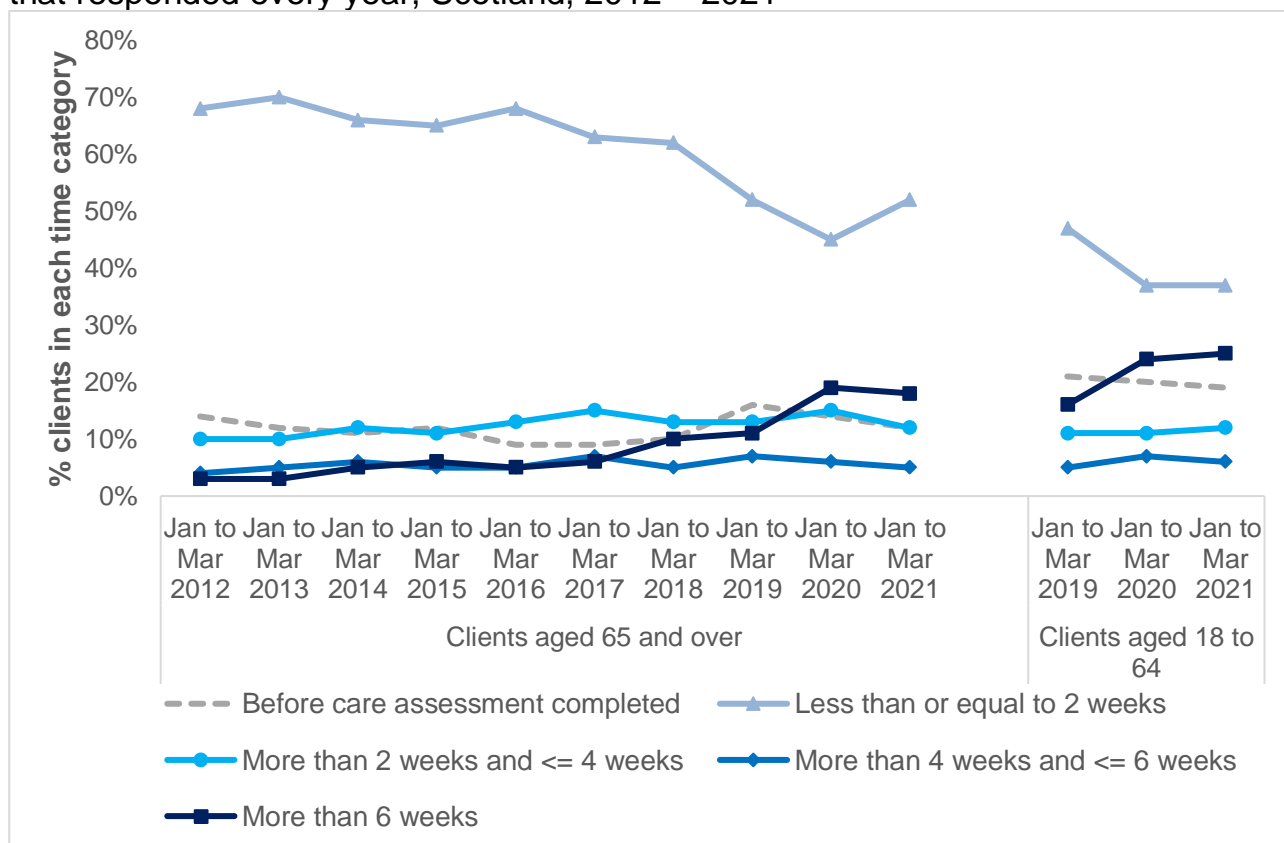
45% in 2020. However, in 2021, the percentage waiting more than six weeks for service delivery declined slightly to 18%, and the percentage of older clients receiving service delivery in less than or equal to two weeks increased to 52%.

For the 20 local authorities which submitted data on younger clients (aged 18 to 64) each year, there has been a decline in the percentage, from 68% in 2019 to 56% in 2021, receiving a personal care service prior to completion of the assessment or less than or equal to two weeks. There is a corresponding increase from 16% to 25%, in the proportion of younger clients waiting more than six weeks.

See accompanying dataset for local authority data and to determine which local authorities responded every year.

Figure 4. The percentage of adults receiving a new service in less than 2 weeks has declined and there’s a corresponding increase in the percentage waiting more than 6 weeks between assessment and service delivery

Time intervals recorded for clients in the all eligibility criteria category between completion of assessment and new personal service delivery, in local authorities that responded every year, Scotland, 2012 – 2021



Source: Scottish Government Quarterly Monitoring Return

Notes:

1. For clients aged 65 and over, 15 local authorities responded, and for clients aged 18 to 64, 20 local authorities responded every year between 2012 and 2021. Please see data completeness in the accompanying dataset for which local authorities.

4. Background information

4.1 Data sources

The Scottish Government Quarterly monitoring return was used to compile this Statistics release.

The [National standard eligibility criteria and waiting times](#) for personal and nursing care was introduced in 2009-10, and was initially developed for older people following the publication of [Lord Sutherland's review](#), and was extended to all adults with the [extension of free personal and nursing care](#) in April 2019. The national standard seeks to deliver the shared commitments agreed by Scottish Ministers and local authority elected members. Eligibility criteria and waiting times for new social care clients completing a community care assessment and new personal care clients is collected annually.

The eligibility criteria and waiting times collection, although collected annually, is part of the longer running (since July 2002) Scottish Government Quarterly Monitoring Return collection on the number of people receiving personal care services at home, the number of self-funders receiving Free Personal Care and Free Nursing Care payments.

The results of the survey data can be accessed via the [Social Care Analysis page on the Scottish Government website](#).

All data in this publication is sourced from the [Scottish Government Quarterly Monitoring Return](#).

In 2019, this survey was updated to collect information on under 65s receiving Free Personal Care following the extension of the policy to people of all ages who are eligible.

4.2 Understanding the statistics in this report

Time period

All information in this Statistics Release is presented for the last quarter of each financial year - from 1 January to 31 March. Information is reported for a rolling ten-year period, which in the case of this release is from 2012 to 2021. However, with the extension of free personal care to under 65's in April 2019, data on 18 to 64 year olds is recorded from 2019 to 2021 only.

Eligibility criteria

In general, care should be taken when comparing the data on 'numbers' and 'proportions' of people completing a community care assessment or beginning a new personal care service. The number/proportion of people recorded is collected

for the last 3 months of the financial year and so represents the number of people completing assessments or receiving personal care service delivery from January to March, rather than for the whole financial year. This does not represent the number of people for the full 52 weeks of the year.

Similarly, for the majority of local authorities, only clients assessed as 'critical' or 'substantial' on the eligibility criteria are able to receive care, due to the limitation of financial resources preventing more people from being supported.

Waiting times

As with the Eligibility Criteria data, the information provided for clients waiting times between first contact and completion of a community care assessment, and between completion of a community care assessment to delivery of new personal care service provides a snapshot at the end of the financial year.

The data on number of clients waiting times from completion of a community care assessment to delivery of new personal care service is also used to determine the total numbers of new clients.

4.3 Glossary

Community care assessment - a series of actions, undertaken jointly as far as possible with the person being assessed, which includes identifying the extent and nature of their needs, and the key outcomes they would like to achieve, the extent to which these may be enabled or met by community care services or support, informing the person and/or carer of the conclusion, and, where appropriate, devising a care plan and arranging services.

Delivery of service (date) - the date by which the services set out in the agreed Care and Support Plan are being delivered to the client. The Delivery of Service date is therefore the first date after confirmation of need on which either personal care at home, or personal and nursing care in a care home, or a Direct Payment/ Self Directed Support provided for personal care needs, commences.

First contact (date) - the date on which the potential need for an assessment of social care needs was first notified to the Local Authority, by or on behalf of the client. For clarity, clients are only included in this return if their community care assessment end date or care plan date, is within the monitoring period.

New client - someone who was not receiving services provided or arranged by local authority adult social care services at the time of the contact or referral that triggered the assessment. This does not mean that the person has never been assessed previously or received services in the past. People who receive information or advice or a basic service as a result of screening but without further assessment are excluded from this definition.

Personal care at home - includes intermediate care (e.g. rapid response, crisis care) but, for the purposes of this measure, excludes: telecare, equipment and adaptations, and nursing services provided by the NHS.

Personal care services - includes personal care at home, personal and nursing care in a care home, or a Direct Payment / Self Directed Support provided for personal care needs.

4.4 Limitations of the data

Completeness of data returns is a major limitation of this dataset.

There are three tables in the collection:

- Table 1 of the collection return counts new clients, by age band, of the numbers of older people in each of the eligibility criteria categories following a completed community care assessment.
- Table 2 of the collection return provides the distribution of time intervals from first contact to completion of a community care assessment separately for each of the eligibility criteria categories, for new clients recorded in Table 1.
- Table 3 of the collection return provides the distribution of time intervals from completion of a community care assessment to delivery of a relevant personal care service with the start date in the reporting period, separately for clients in each of the age and eligibility criteria categories. Therefore Table 3 does not count the same cohort of people as Tables 1 and 2.

For all three tables in the return there has been a decline in the number of local authorities that have completed it over time. For tables 1 and 2, there is a decline in completion from 29-30 local authorities in 2012-2014, to 23 in 2020 and 24 in 2021. For Table 3 there is a decline in completion from 27 local authorities in 2013 to 23 in 2020 and 2021, with a low of 20 local authorities in 2016. Tables of data completeness by local authority for each table in the return are detailed in the accompanying dataset.

In addition to the declining numbers of local authorities completing the data return, the local authorities completing the return vary each year. Both of these factors prevents a Scotland level analysis for Eligibility Criteria or Waiting Times. Any trend data contained within this report is for indicative purposes only using the local authorities that have responded every year between 2012 and 2021 and does not represent a national-level trend. Due to the difficulty cited by local authorities in providing the data, we advise caution in drawing further conclusions from the dataset, as different methodologies and recording systems in local authorities have affected data quality and comparability.

Users are advised that trends in the report, or that may be extracted from the dataset, are not of sufficient quality or consistency to support detailed analysis or modelling.

Local authorities provided a range of reasons for this data being of difficulty to provide. These reasons vary by local authority, but include:

- data required for the return is held independently, and so multiple datasets (specifically for those receiving a service) are necessary to complete the return,
- data is not recorded in the correct format or cannot be differentiated e.g. between clients receiving personal and non-personal care services,
- updates to recording systems preventing data delivery,
- data is not held by the local authority for this request.

Public Health Scotland (PHS) are developing plans to capture waiting times data within existing Social Care collections returned to PHS.

5. Data at a local authority level

The workbook accompanying this report provides more detailed information for each of the 32 Local Authority areas in Scotland:

Eligibility Criteria

Annex 1: Number and rates per 1,000 population of new clients (broken down by age) receiving a community care assessment in the final quarter for each financial year.

Annex 2: Number and rates per 1,000 population of new personal care clients (broken down by age) receiving a new service in the final quarter for each financial year.

Waiting Times

Annex 3: Proportion of new clients (broken down by age) in each waiting times and each eligibility criteria between first contact and completion of a community care assessment in the final quarter for each financial year.

Annex 4: Proportion of new personal care clients (broken down by age) in each waiting times and each eligibility criteria between completion of a community care assessment and delivery of a personal care service in the final quarter for each financial year.

Data Completeness

Annex 5: Local authorities responding to each table of the return monitoring eligibility criteria and waiting times in the final quarter for each financial year.

6. Non-Official Statistics

This is the first report produced to aid the understanding of the annually published data tables for Eligibility Criteria and Waiting Times. Data up to 2018 were available in Excel table format only.

Public Health Scotland (PHS) are developing plans to capture waiting times data within existing Social Care collections returned to PHS. This will be the penultimate release of this data by the Scottish Government using the existing collection format, with data for 2022 published later in 2022.

Correspondence and enquiries

This statistics release was published on 10th May 2022. Further details and analysis are available on request from the following address:

Jan Young
Health & Social Care Analysis Division
Scottish Government
0131 244 6261
E-mail: SWStat@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:
Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: (0131) 244 8332,
e-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

How to access background or source data

A spreadsheet accompanying this statistical release with the background data can be accessed via the [Social Care Analysis page on the Scottish Government website](#).

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, Telephone: (0131) 244 8332, e-mail statistics.enquiries@gov.scot.

If you would like to provide feedback on this publication, [please complete this short feedback survey](#).

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please [sign up to the ScotStat register](#).

To see details of future publications, please visit the [forthcoming publications page](#) on the Scottish Government website.

ISBN 978-1-80435-426-1 (web only)

Crown Copyright

You may use or re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the [Open Government Licence](#).