

£50m to further improve NHS waiting times in Wales

The investment will be targeted at making improvements to waiting times in elective surgery, diagnostics and therapies over and above those already planned.

Over the last five years, referrals to hospital-based services have increased by around 20% – from 1.07 million in the 12 months ending March 2013 to 1.27 million in the 12 months ending March 2016.

Increases in individual specialities are even higher, with gastroenterology referrals up 37% and orthopaedic referrals up 22% – where the NHS is now able to see and treat more conditions than previously.

But despite the increased demand for treatment, over the last two years, referral to treatment (RTT) and diagnostic waiting times performance has improved markedly.

The number of people waiting more than 36 weeks from referral to treatment has fallen from 28,654 in August 2015 to 12,354 in March 2017 and the number of people waiting more than eight weeks for a diagnostic test has fallen to 4,741, from a high of 28,000.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“The demand on the NHS in Wales, as well as across the other nations in the UK, continues to grow. This places additional pressures on the service to deliver timely care for patients.

“While I expect health boards to plan and deliver sustainable services that meet the needs of their local populations, the £50m investment I’m announcing today will help NHS Wales deal with the extra demand by further reducing waiting times in key areas – such as elective surgery, diagnostics and therapies.”

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“We know that our health service continues to experience increasing demands and pressures. We are providing this additional funding from our reserves so health boards across Wales can go above and beyond the plans they already have in place for this year to drive up performance and offer the best quality service for patients.”