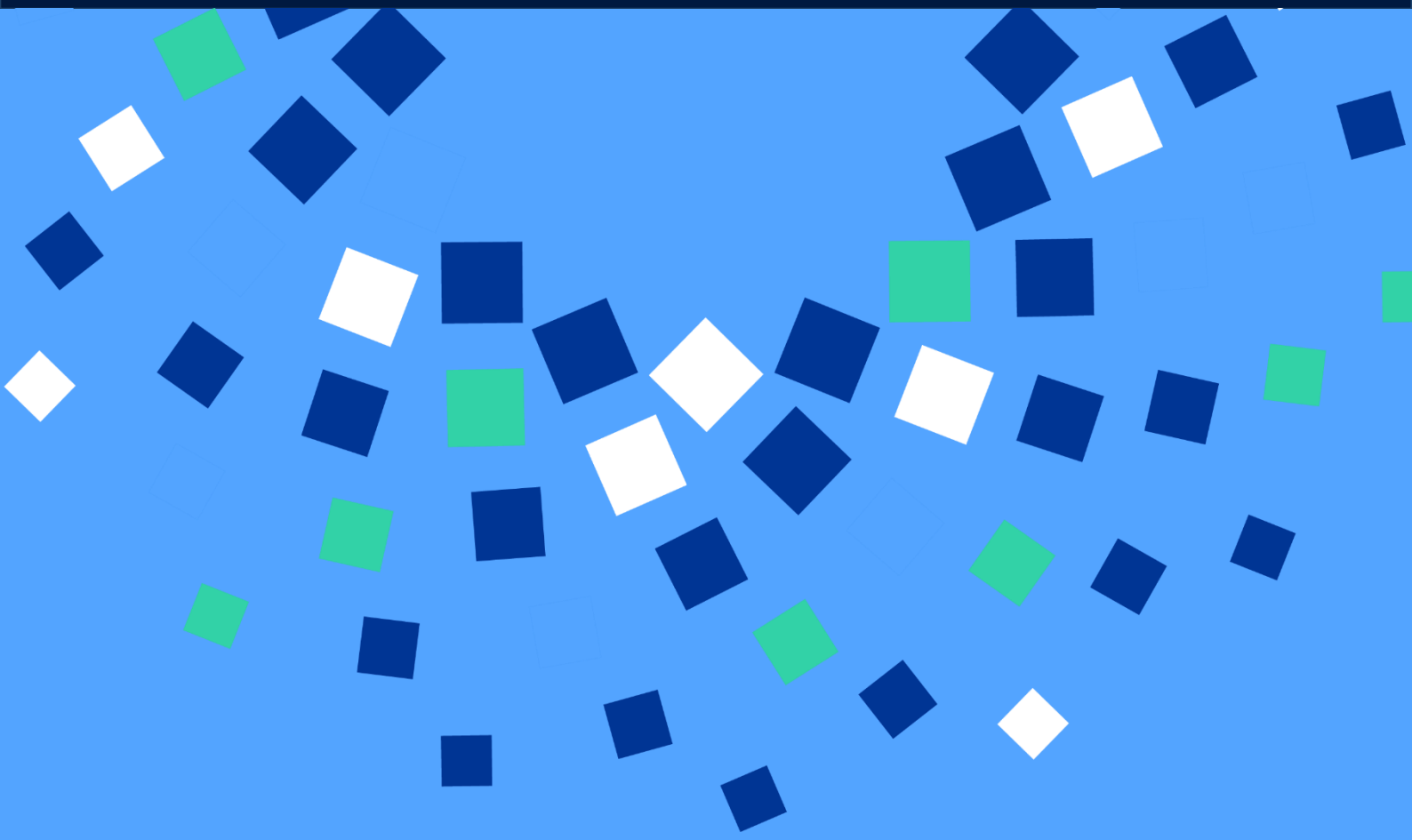
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Data Explained

Diagnostic and Therapy Services Waiting Times (DATW)

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Date: October 2026

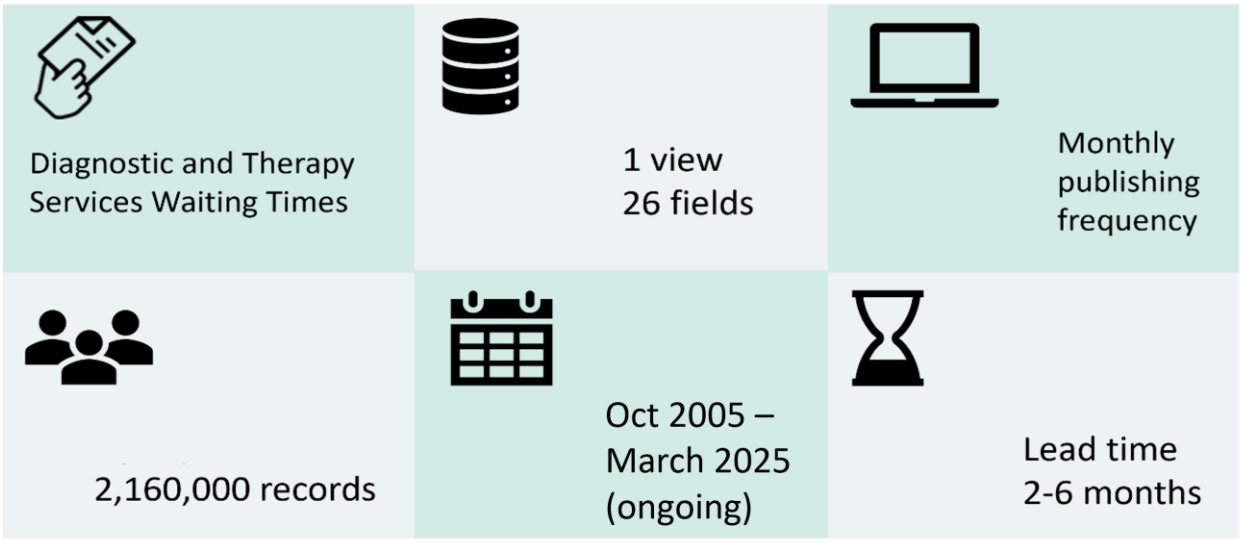


Summary

This Data Explained summarises experiences and learning from working with the Diagnostic and Therapy Services Waiting Times (DATW) data. This publication is intended to help guide future researchers using this data and to provide feedback on future data development and documentation.

The administrative data discussed in this Data Explained was made securely available through an approved SAIL project via the independent Information Governance Review Panel (IGRP) – project 1934. The data used in this research project comes from Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) and was accessed through the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank. The data were not originally collected for research, and gaps and inconsistencies in their recording are expected; some are detailed below.

Overview



Introduction

The Diagnostic and Therapy Services Waiting Times (DATW) data is an aggregated data source that provides comprehensive information on waiting times for access to a range of specified diagnostic scans and therapy services delivered by the NHS in Wales ('Dataset - Health Data Research Gateway', n.d.). As the data are presented in aggregate form, it does not contain person-level identifiers and therefore cannot be linked to other datasets or data sources.

DATW captures a snapshot of waiting-time activity on a monthly basis. This is done by recording the total number of patients waiting for each specific service and associated sub-service at each hospital or treatment site across Wales. In addition, the data includes information on the length of time patients have been waiting, the Local Health Board in which the patient resides, and the health provider responsible for managing and delivering the patient's treatment. The data includes all relevant appointments falling under the responsibility of Welsh health providers, including cases where patients are not residents in a Welsh Local Health Board but are awaiting treatment in a Welsh hospital/treatment site.

How is the data collected?

Health Boards and Trusts provide data monthly. Submission is based on the provider, not the resident population. Data submission has been mandatory since April 2004 ('DSCN 52/03', n.d.). Figure 1 presents a timeline of key events for the DATW. This list is not exhaustive, but aims to cover significant changes and updates.

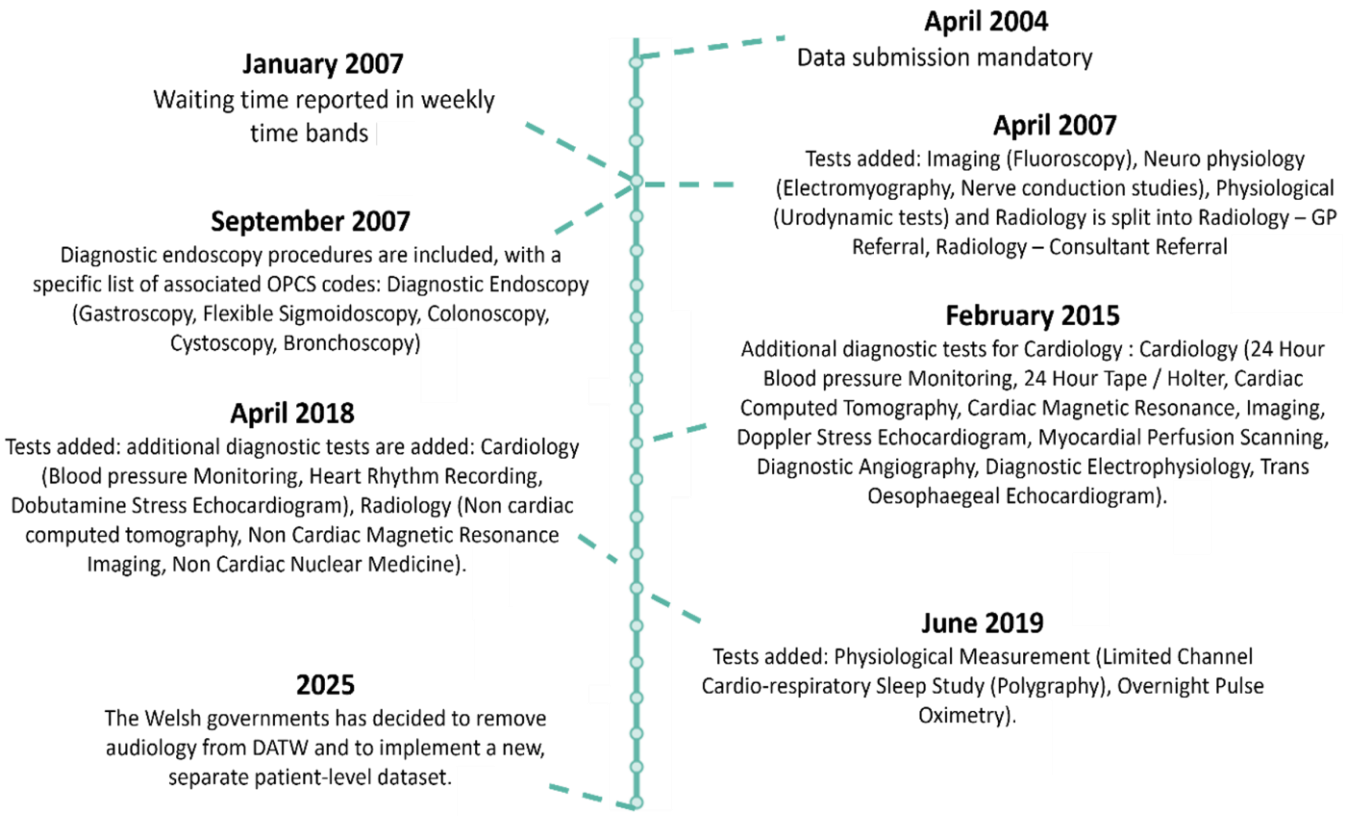


Figure 1 - A timeline of key events for the DATW.

Data structure and linkage

DATW is provided within SAIL as a single, aggregated table, and covers waiting time information for 16 diagnostic and therapy services, broken down into 47 associated sub-services. This information is correct at the time of writing. As an aggregated data source, it does not contain the individual-level, anonymous linkage field (ALF) used to link patient-level records in SAIL. Instead, records can be linked to helath care providers.

Key variables

Aside from the following key variables, it is possible to recover information on the health board where the patients are resident and on the healthcare provider responsible for managing the patient's treatment.

Field name	**Description**
DATW_STAGE_ID_PE	Encrypted Stage ID
CENSUS_DT	Date on which the list is measured. This is the last day of the month the return relates to.
COUNT_PAT_WAITING	Numeric field showing the number of patients in each time band.
PROV_ORG_CURR_CD *PROV_ORG_CURR_NAME*	Provider Unit Code/name. This is the organisation code for the health care provider responsible for managing the patient's treatment.
TREATMENT_SITE_ORG_NAME	The hospital site where diagnostic and therapeutic services are provided. Note: the site code 'community' is used to record information on waiting times for services provided by community services, clinics and home visits.
PAT_RESIDENCE_HEALTH_ORG_CURR_CD *PAT_RESIDENCE_HEALTH_ORG_CURR_NAME*	Current resident Health Unit Code/name. The code/name for the Local Health Board where the patient is a resident, identified via the NHS postcode directory.
SERVICE_HEADING	Name of specified diagnostic and therapy services included in the monthly collection of Waiting Times data.
SERVICE_SUBHEADING	Subdivisions of the specified services used for the monthly collection of Waiting Times data.
WAITING_TIMES_BAND	Band times for reporting the waiting time counts. This is reported in time bands, described as weeks up to 40 weeks wait. All the waits beyond that are reported in one group. The count of waiting time starts from the waiting list date and ends on the CENSUS_DT.

Table 2 - Key variables in DATW.

What can the data be used for?

DATW data can be used to identify which health providers and local health units are under the most service pressure (by checking how long patients are waiting and how many are waiting), and which services have the longest waiting times. For examples, see Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5.

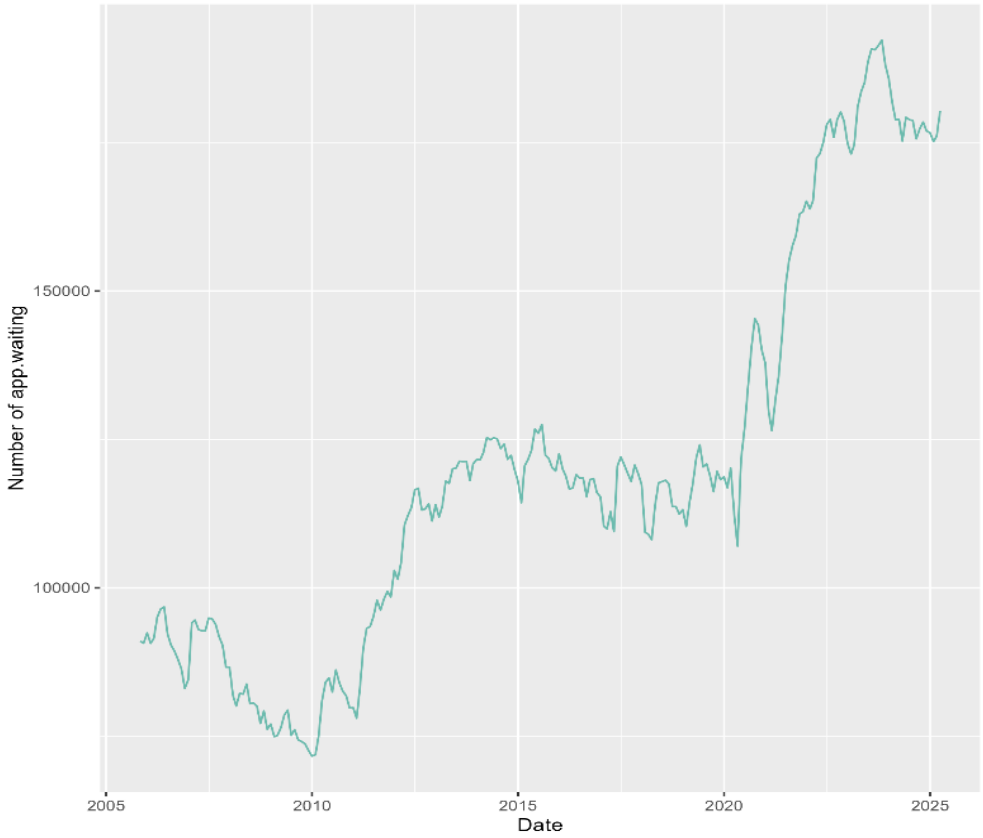


Figure 3 - Total number of appointments (diagnostic scans and therapy services) waiting to be resolved.

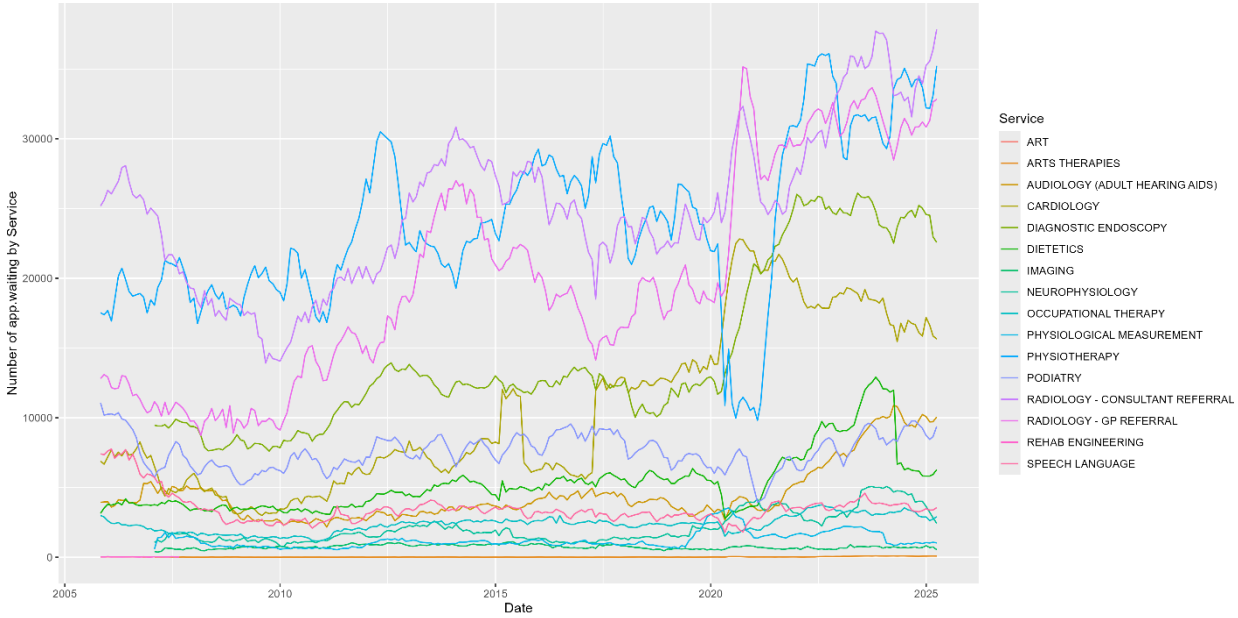


Figure 4 - Total number of appointments (diagnostic scans and therapy services) waiting to be resolved by service.

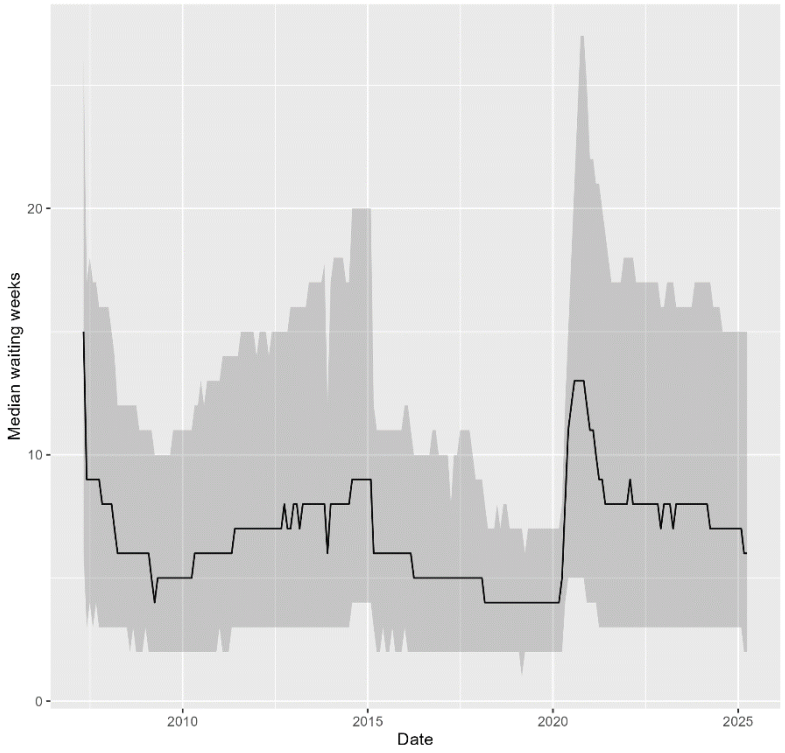


Figure 4 - Median waiting weeks time with interquartile range (shaded area) for all the diagnostic scans and therapy services waiting to be resolved.

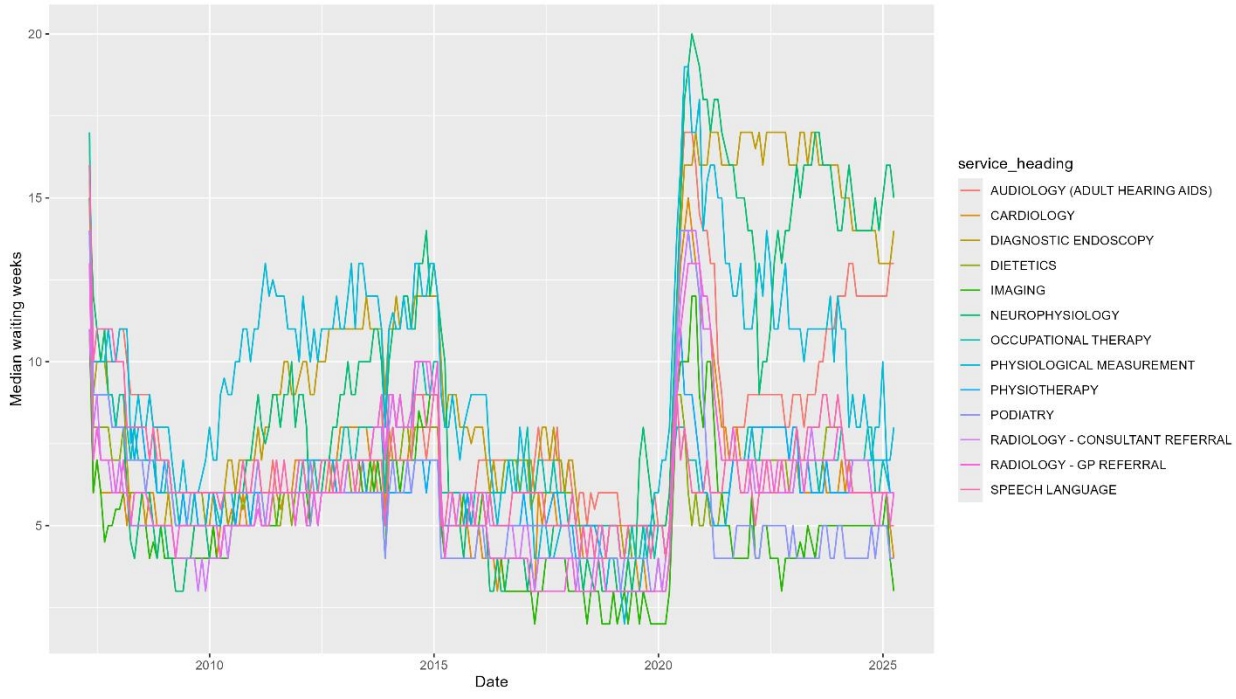


Figure 5 - Median waiting weeks time by service.

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Glossary

Abbreviation	Description
ADR UK	Administrative Data Research UK
ALF	Anonymous Linkage field
DHCW	Digital Health and Care Wales
IGRP	Information Governance Review Panel
NHS	National Health Service
SAIL	Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank

Disclaimer

This work was produced using administrative data accessed through the SAIL Databank. The use of the data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the SAIL Databank or data owners in relation to the interpretation or analysis.

This work uses research data which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

Acknowledgements

This study uses anonymised data held in the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank, which is part of the national population data research infrastructure for Wales. We would like to acknowledge all the data providers who make anonymised data available for research. This study was carried out as part of the ADR Wales programme of work. ADR Wales unites research expertise from Swansea University Medical School and WISERD (Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data) at Cardiff University with analysts from Welsh Government.

This Data Insight has been produced by the ADR Wales Ymateb research team. It provides a snapshot of informative research currently underway at ADR Wales but is not intended to provide a complete picture of work undertaken within this field or the ADR Wales programme of work. The information presented in this Data Insight has been reviewed by ADR Wales colleagues with expertise within this thematic area and accepted to be accurate at the point of publication. Views expressed in this Data Insight are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of ADR Wales partner organisations.

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Publication contact

Please contact the SAIL Databank via the Helpdesk.

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