

Scotland - The Facts

In the maelstrom of discussion over the coalition's plans for the English NHS, which we in Scotland can only watch with fascinated horror, I am sending a small piece of good news indicating that there is an evidence-based alternative to the "mad scientists" bent on radical reform south of Hadrian's wall. In the course of obtaining information about Scottish waiting lists and waiting times, I was given a link by an ISD Scotland statistician to the recent publication by the Office of National Statistics of comparisons of waiting times for 11 elective hospital procedures for the four countries of the UK between 2005-06 and 2009-10. These have been standardised for comparative purposes; I have averaged the 50th and 90th percentile waits for the eleven procedures and placed them in rank order by country for each year. Waiting times for Scotland and England are comparable, with Northern Ireland and Wales lagging; all four countries show substantial reductions in waiting times over the last five years. Scotland ranks first for four out of five years for median waiting times (50th percentile) and first for three out of five years for 90th percentile waits. The Scottish results were obtained despite the devolved administration abandoning the internal market and payment by results in 2003. In 2008-09, only 7690 NHS inpatients and day cases (0.6% of the total) were treated in Independent Hospitals. Scotland's single ISTC in Stracathro treated a small number of patients in 2007-08 and was then taken over by the public sector. The results confirm other evidence discussed previously that, with respect to clinical activity, demand and supply in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the Scottish NHS have been in broad equilibrium in the last five years. Claims by Julian Le Grand et al that Scottish waiting lists and waiting times lag behind English waiting times are unsupported by this recent evidence. I don't suppose this will have any impact on the neoliberal ideologues.

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	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland
	50th percentile of days waited (rank order)			
2005-06	89 (2nd)	86 (1st)	133 (4th)	125 (3rd)
2006-07	86 (2nd)	72 (1st)	128 (4th)	104 (3rd)
2007-08	65 (2nd)	59 (1st)	107 (4th)	90 (3rd)
2008-09	49 (1st)	53 (2nd)	83 (4th)	82 (3rd)
2009-10	50 (2nd)	48 (1st)	72 (4th)	70 (3rd)
	90th percentile of days waited (rank order)			
2005-06	180 (1st)	191 (2nd)	298 (3rd)	334 (4th)
2006-07	157 (2nd)	152 (1st)	254 (4th)	242 (3rd)
2007-08	128 (2nd)	121 (1st)	213 (4th)	183 (3rd)
2008-09	99 (1st)	100 (2nd)	166 (4th)	153 (3rd)
2009-10	100 (2nd)	97 (1st)	149 (4th)	139 (3rd)

Average waiting times between referral and admission for 11 elective hospital procedures¹ 2005-06 to 2009-10²

1. Procedures:- Angioplasty, Angiography, Bypass Surgery, Cataract Surgery, Hip Replacement, Knee Replacement, Endoscope of Bladder, Endoscope of Upper Gastrointestinal Tract, Hernia Repair, Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy, Varicose Surgery.

2. United Kingdom Health Statistics 2010; Tables 6.6 a-f; Edition No 4; Official National Statistics