

Quarterly Diagnostics Census and Monthly Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity Return Consultation



NHS England INFORMATION READER BOX

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Additional Circulation List	
Description	To consult users on proposed changes to the quarterly diagnostics census and the monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity report. A document summarising the findings and conclusions will be published in response to the consultation.
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Document Status

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Quarterly Diagnostics Census and Monthly Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity Return Consultation

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1 Quarterly Diagnostics Census and Monthly Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity Consultation

1.1 Introduction

NHS England is seeking comments and views from data producers and users on ceasing collection and publication of the quarterly diagnostics census. NHS England is also seeking views on the diagnostics tests collected by the monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity return (DM01).

1.2 Background

Quarterly Diagnostics Census

NHS England currently collects and publishes the quarterly diagnostics census (census). This captures data on patients waiting six weeks or more for all diagnostic tests at the quarter end. Data for this collection is available from February 2006.

NHS England has been evaluating its collections with a view to ceasing those collections of lower value to reduce unnecessary burden on the NHS of collecting and processing data. The census has been identified as part of this process because:

- the census does not collect the total waiting list. Therefore it cannot be used to calculate the operational standard that less than 1% of patients should wait six weeks or more for a diagnostic test from referral,
- NHS England has sought initial views from its key stakeholders within NHS England, NHS Improvement and the Department of Health who have confirmed that they do not use this data,
- published data from the diagnostics census are rarely used - a review of census webpage usage and downloads for the census shows small numbers in comparison to other collections,
- as data producers, NHS England rarely gets asked for any information or analyses on these census data,
- in 2015, NHS England carried out a consultation to drop the Annual Imaging and Radiodiagnostics Statistics (KH12)¹. The published consultation response also indicated a desire to discontinue the diagnostic census.

A further detail of website downloads for the quarterly diagnostics census and data captured by the census are shown in Annex A.

¹ <https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/imaging-radiodiagnostics-statistics/>

Monthly Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity

NHS England currently collects and publishes the monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity return, DM01 (monthly diagnostics collection). This collection includes data on waiting times and activity for 15 key diagnostic tests and procedures. It contains more detailed information than the census on total waiting list at the month end (broken down by weekly time bands), activity (broken down by waiting list, planned and unscheduled), and waiting list tests. Data for this collection is available from January 2006. The monthly diagnostics collection is used to measure performance against the diagnostic operational standard.

The list of 15 tests in monthly diagnostics collection (see below) was derived in 2004 by key users such as clinical leads within the Department of Health (DH), Connecting for Health (CfH), and also pilot sites within the NHS. The tests were selected to cover high volumes and potential long waits.

Diagnostic test grouping	15 key tests
Imaging	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Computer Tomography Non obstetric ultrasound Barium enema Dexa scan
Physiological measurement	Audiology assessments Cardiology - echocardiography Cardiology - electrophysiology Peripheral neurophysiology Respiratory physiology – sleep studies Urodynamics
Endoscopy	Colonoscopy Flexisigmoidoscopy Cystoscopy Gastroscopy

NHS England recognises that use of tests changes over time as the NHS develops. NHS England is therefore also taking the opportunity to evaluate what is collected in the monthly diagnostics collection to ensure that it focuses on what matters to patients.

The number of diagnostic tests carried out continues to increase. Whilst many of the tests continue to be high volume, there are some tests where numbers are reducing or where they continue to represent a small proportion of activity (See graph 1, annex A). For example Barium Enema is being phased out.

1.3 Proposed Changes

The recommendations are:

- that the quarterly diagnostics census collection and publication are dropped. As stated above, there is little evidence to suggest that the benefit of collection outweighs the burden on the NHS in supplying and processing it,
- to consider the 15 key tests collected in the monthly diagnostics return including dropping the Barium Enema test from the collection.

1.4 Consultation Process

Responses to this consultation should be sent via the online survey by Thursday 5 April 2018. If you have any questions about the consultation, please email england.nhsdata@nhs.net.

The responses will be analysed to inform the future collection and publication of the quarterly diagnostics census and the monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity return.

We will publish a response document which will summarise responses to the consultation and decisions made based on this in May/June 2018. Please note that individual responses may be published unless anonymity is requested.

If you have any other general feedback about the quarterly diagnostics census or the monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity publication, please email england.nhsdata@nhs.net.

1.5 Further Information

Full details of published quarterly Diagnostics Census data are available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/diagnostics-census-data/>

Full details of published monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity data are available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

2 Annex A – Quarterly Census and Monthly Data

2.1 Website usage for the Quarterly Diagnostics Census

The number of views of the diagnostic census webpage and downloads of these statistics are the smallest of all our collections.

Table 1: Unique web downloads of Operational Information for Commissioning Central Team statistics*

	Diag Census	DM01	KH03	QAR	Msitrep	DTOC	MAR	A&E	MSA	QMCO	RTT
Oct-16	157	1,220	1,590	769	805	4,838	1,810	4,858	654	780	4,841
Nov-16	185	1,569	1,869	962	708	5,425	1,727	6,073	587	1,225	6,176
Dec-16	91	1,077	1,690	605	681	4,559	1,459	4,383	591	753	4,028
Jan-17	192	1,464	2,678	951	1,254	6,506	1,871	7,471	777	1,330	5,532
Feb-17	175	1,333	2,866	800	897	6,193	1,834	6,603	677	1,594	5,139
Mar-17	173	1,553	2,184	799	593	7,708	1,664	6,543	725	1,218	5,727
Apr-17	172	1,682	1,628	528	632	4,673	1,071	5,198	631	966	4,025
May-17	171	1,363	1,983	900	615	6,172	1,696	5,991	604	1,209	4,892
Jun-17	134	1,340	2,092	678	576	6,712	1,813	4,857	793	888	4,200
Jul-17	168	1,305	1,547	638	850	6,685	1,329	5,136	723	1,021	4,270
Aug-17	183	1,321	1,805	792	527	5,921	1,249	4,946	802	924	4,202
Sep-17	140	1,262	1,683	544	518	6,461	1,351	4,576	590	1,056	3,938

* As at October 2017

2.2 Quarterly diagnostics census data, quarter ending June 2017

At quarter ending June 2017, the diagnostics census reported 12,000 patients waiting 6 weeks or more for a diagnostic test that were not covered by the monthly diagnostics collection (see table 3). If NHS England cease to collect the census this information would no longer be captured. Diagnostics tests are grouped into 11 broad areas.

Data on patients waiting 6 weeks or more in following areas are partially captured in the monthly collection and partially collected in the census:

- cardiology;
- endoscopy;
- imaging;
- neurophysiology;
- respiratory.

Data on patients waiting 6 weeks or more in the following areas are only collected in the quarterly census:

- GI physiology;
- ophthalmic science;
- pathology;
- vascular.

For audiology and urodynamics, the monthly and quarterly collections have the same coverage of diagnostic tests.

Tables 2 and 3 show diagnostic waits of 6 weeks or longer by area. Table 2 combines data from both the monthly collection and quarterly census and table 3 shows data only captured in the quarterly census.

Table 2: Diagnostic waits of 6 weeks or longer by area – Quarter ending June 2017

Diagnostic Area	6<13 Weeks	13+ Weeks	Total 6+ Weeks
Audiology	832	128	960
Cardiology	4,733	1,296	6,029
Endoscopy	5,224	1,686	6,910
GI Physiology	487	365	852
Imaging	8,097	1,116	9,213
Neurophysiology	806	315	1,121
Ophthalmic Science	270	122	392
Pathology	1,411	705	2,116
Respiratory Physiology	626	280	906
Urodynamics	311	94	405
Vascular Technology	252	111	363
Total Area	23,049	6,218	29,267

Source: June 2017 monthly diagnostic return (DM01) and June 2017 Quarterly Diagnostics Census

Table 3 – Diagnostic waits of 6 weeks or longer not captured in June 2017 monthly diagnostic return

Diagnostic Area	6<13 Weeks	13+ Weeks	Total 6+ Weeks
Cardiology	2,301	947	3,248
Endoscopy	633	524	1,157
GI Physiology	487	365	852
Imaging	1,669	673	2,342
Neurophysiology	570	307	877
Ophthalmic Science	270	122	392
Pathology	1,411	705	2,116
Respiratory Physiology	433	218	651
Vascular Technology	252	111	363
All Areas	8,026	3,972	11,998

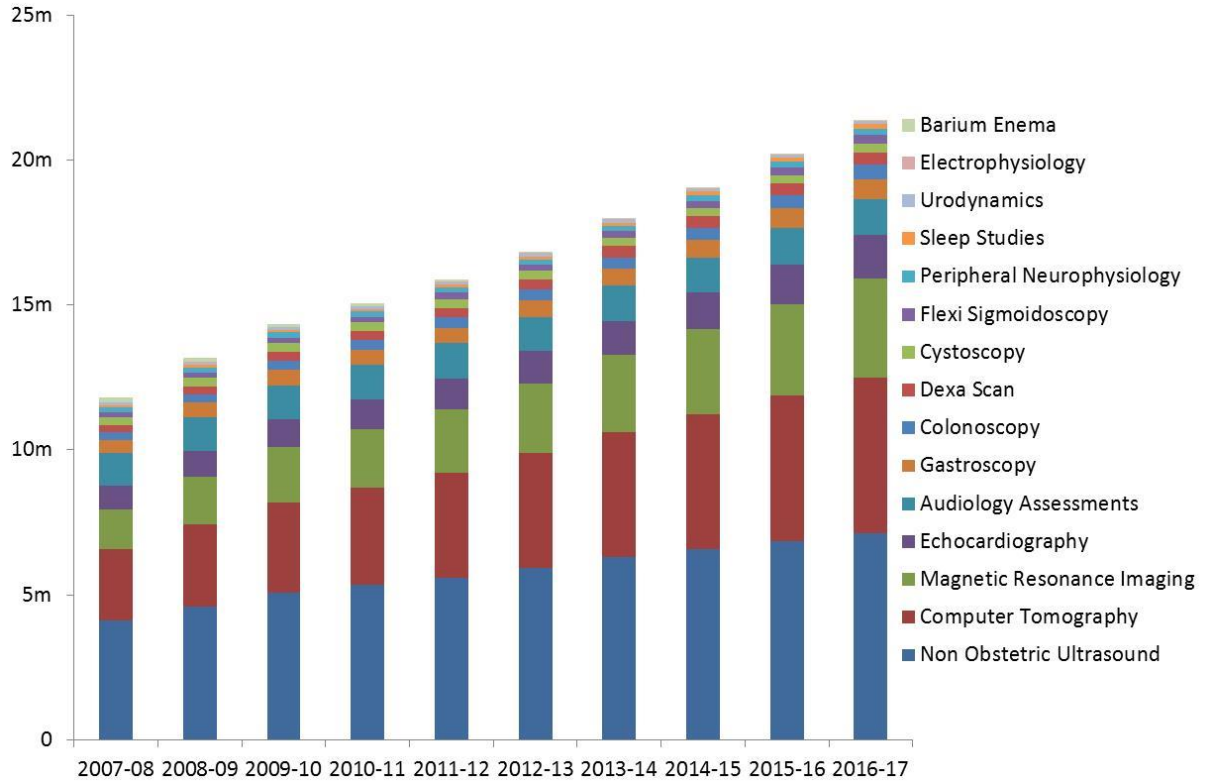
Source: Quarterly Diagnostics Census

2.3 Monthly Diagnostics Activity and Performance

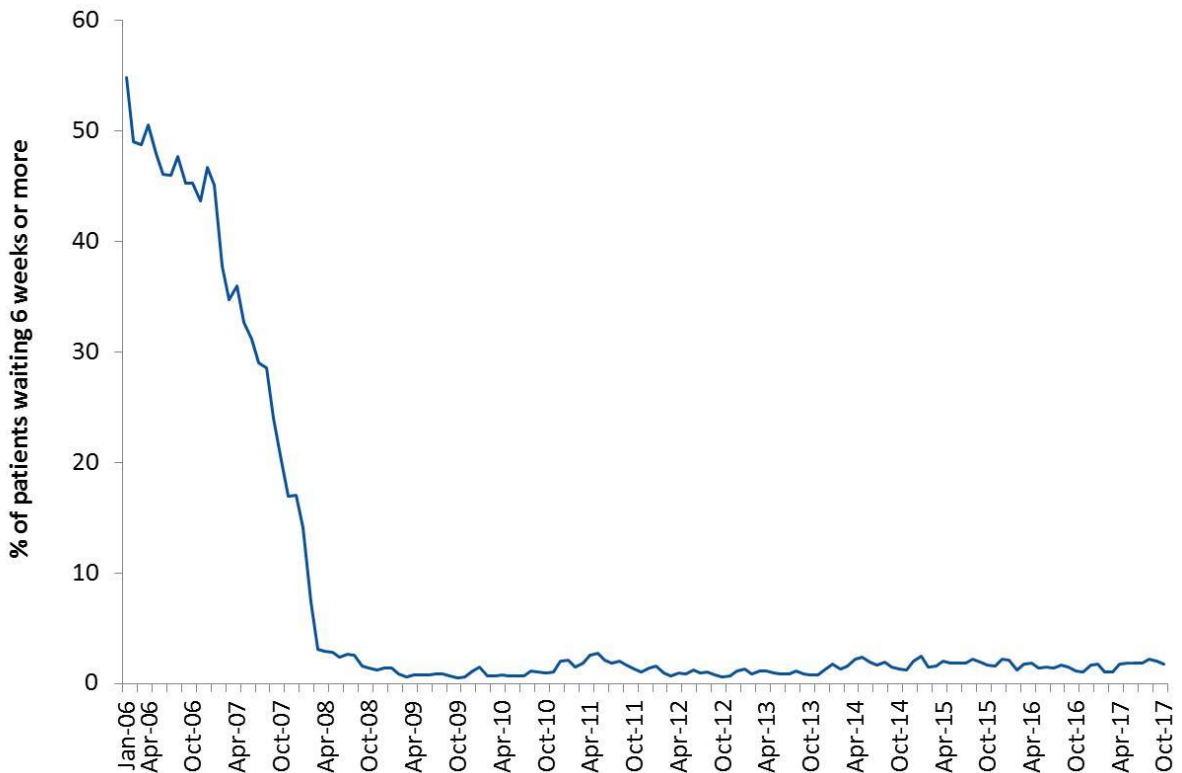
Diagnostics test activity can fluctuate significantly month to month, with particularly notable decreases in December due to the bank holidays. However, the underlying trend has shown an increase in activity since January 2006 when data is first available. See graph 1 and table 4.

The proportion of patients waiting six weeks or longer dropped sharply between January 2007 and March 2008 and has remained broadly stable since then (graph 2 and table 5). This reduction is most likely the result of Trusts working towards the NHS Improvement Plan (June 2004) milestone that no one should wait longer than six weeks for a diagnostic test by March 2008. Since then performance has fluctuated. Between April 2008 and March 2017, performance across all 15 key tests combined has ranged between 0.5% and 2.9% each year.

Graph 1: Activity for 15 diagnostics tests, England 2007-08 to 2016-17



Graph 2: Percentage of patients waiting 6+ weeks at month end for all tests



Source: Monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity (DM01)

Full monthly diagnostics activity and waiting list data is available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

Table 4: Activity per month for 15 diagnostics tests

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Proportion of activity (2016/17)	Average annual increase
Non Obstetric Ultrasound	4,100,638	4,606,313	5,073,625	5,353,578	5,592,035	5,918,780	6,314,999	6,565,867	6,862,731	7,123,828	33.3%	6.3%
Computer Tomography	2,477,941	2,817,363	3,113,470	3,339,342	3,614,539	3,966,109	4,286,892	4,675,703	5,021,181	5,377,908	25.2%	9.0%
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	1,360,107	1,644,600	1,895,842	2,035,440	2,192,511	2,407,441	2,667,286	2,923,242	3,144,880	3,425,118	16.0%	10.8%
Echocardiography	808,995	904,782	965,094	994,334	1,052,974	1,110,874	1,185,157	1,268,299	1,369,745	1,480,836	6.9%	6.9%
Audiology Assessments	1,129,110	1,157,196	1,184,204	1,213,293	1,230,460	1,179,634	1,202,400	1,198,652	1,238,634	1,227,084	5.7%	0.9%
Gastroscopy	459,801	488,974	515,509	513,416	531,909	557,896	586,525	616,009	684,998	696,455	3.3%	4.7%
Colonoscopy	261,590	292,136	315,657	324,429	360,443	399,637	401,278	420,972	455,401	503,219	2.4%	7.5%
Dexa Scan	240,928	281,380	309,456	310,733	319,597	337,105	377,379	388,885	399,379	420,542	2.0%	6.4%
Cystoscopy	286,507	297,588	305,312	306,910	312,422	289,993	295,927	295,956	289,690	313,023	1.5%	1.0%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	175,377	182,722	197,342	200,462	217,767	232,674	228,756	238,772	264,388	288,960	1.4%	5.7%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	175,489	166,004	174,586	173,262	174,246	172,734	183,371	195,461	204,534	223,439	1.0%	2.7%
Sleep Studies	69,919	81,191	86,260	94,171	95,196	96,506	105,028	117,440	139,140	147,063	0.7%	8.6%
Urodynamics	84,266	96,420	91,252	89,055	87,220	87,837	83,591	78,327	78,116	81,650	0.4%	-0.3%
Electrophysiology	14,716	16,306	18,830	20,474	24,483	32,477	32,846	30,340	27,901	27,683	0.1%	7.3%
Barium Enema	154,085	125,365	107,775	83,475	68,550	57,060	37,351	34,785	29,401	24,117	0.1%	-18.6%
Total	11,799,469	13,158,340	14,354,214	15,052,374	15,874,352	16,846,757	17,988,786	19,048,710	20,210,119	21,360,925	100.0%	6.8%

Source: Monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity (DM01)

Full monthly data is available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

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Table 5: Percentage of patients waiting 6 weeks or more at the month end for 15 diagnostics tests

% waiting 6 weeks or more	Mar-06	Mar-07	Mar-08	Mar-09	Mar-10	Mar-11	Mar-12	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17
Non Obstetric Ultrasound	33.3	19.1	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4	1.6	0.3	0.6	0.3
Computer Tomography	19.1	11.4	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.9	0.1	0.2	0.7	0.6	0.5	1.0
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	42.6	27.8	1.8	0.2	0.3	1.6	0.3	1.4	1.2	0.8	1.7	0.7
Echocardiography	52.1	29.0	3.3	0.7	1.2	5.6	0.6	1.1	1.7	2.7	1.7	2.5
Audiology Assessments	79.8	74.3	9.5	1.9	1.0	2.0	0.9	2.8	1.1	1.4	2.1	1.2
Gastroscopy	49.9	28.6	6.2	0.7	1.6	4.2	2.1	2.4	2.6	5.6	5.4	2.2
Colonoscopy	60.7	37.2	9.4	1.1	1.7	5.7	2.4	2.8	2.3	5.7	6.7	3.1
Dexa Scan	50.6	25.8	5.2	0.4	0.7	0.3	1.3	0.1	2.1	0.5	0.4	0.1
Cystoscopy	48.0	35.7	6.5	2.1	2.0	3.1	3.3	3.9	5.7	6.5	5.1	4.5
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	51.3	31.8	6.7	0.5	1.8	4.7	2.7	2.3	1.8	6.8	4.4	2.8
Peripheral Neurophysiology	69.8	48.4	2.7	3.1	1.7	3.7	1.1	0.5	1.9	0.8	3.2	0.8
Sleep Studies	55.0	31.8	6.0	3.1	1.5	3.5	3.2	3.2	2.4	3.6	6.2	2.3
Urodynamics	56.3	33.1	9.4	2.3	4.2	4.8	3.8	4.4	6.1	6.9	7.6	8.6
Electrophysiology	66.1	37.3	7.9	0.4	1.0	2.9	0.1	3.4	2.1	0.2	3.6	1.9
Barium Enema	20.8	10.7	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.9	0.3
Total	48.8	34.7	3.1	0.6	0.7	1.9	0.7	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.1

Source: Monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity (DM01)

Full monthly data is available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

3 Annex B: Consultation Questions

1. What is your name?
2. To enable NHS England to interpret your response it would help us to understand why you are responding. Please can you tell us in what capacity you are completing or responding to this consultation (for example, NHS organisation (please state), patient, academic...)?

Quarterly Diagnostics Census

3. Do you support our proposal to drop the quarterly diagnostics census?
 - Yes, in whole
 - Yes, in part
 - No
4. If answered 'Yes, in part' or 'No' to question 3, please provide further detail of how you use the information and what the impact would be if this information were no longer available.

DM01 Monthly Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity Return

5. We are considering dropping the Barium Enema test from the DM01 monthly diagnostics return. Do you use the information collected on Barium Enema tests?
 - Yes
 - No
6. If answered "Yes" to question 5, please explain how you use this information and what the impact would be if this information were no longer available
7. Are there any additional tests not currently captured in DM01 monthly diagnostics return that you think we should explore the possibility of collecting? Please list which tests and explain why

Quarterly Diagnostics Census and Monthly Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity Return

8. Do you have any further suggestions, proposals or comments for consideration including any comments about the impact on equality or health inequalities?
9. If you are happy for us to get in contact with you to discuss your response in greater detail, please provide your email address here.