

Royal College of Psychiatrists' briefing

Spotlight on: Following up patients discharged from adult acute care



April 2022

This briefing turns the spotlight on to one of the lesser known but nonetheless important performance metrics in mental health services. It measures the percentage of patients discharged from adult acute services that receive follow-up within 72 hours. The metric is included in the NHS Standard Contract¹ and replaces a previous indicator that only measured the follow-up within seven days of those patients who were placed into the Care Programme Approach initiative.

A national standard of 80% being followed up within the 72 hour window has been set and the College has very much welcomed this broader measure of post-discharge support, given the evidence base about the increased risk of dying by suicide in that immediate period after leaving inpatient care.

What does the latest data show about performance and variation?

In January 2022, performance against the national standard declined to its lowest point since data began to be published in NHS Digital's Mental Health Monthly Statistics in October 2020. Only 3,982 of 5,456 patients discharged from adult acute care over that month, which equates to 73.0%. This can be compared to 73.2% in the previous month (4,158 of 5,683) or 76.4% in January 2021 (4,551 of 5,960).

48 of the 95 CCGs (50.5%) with relevant cases in January 2022 did meet the standard. This includes NHS East Staffordshire CCG and NHS Southport and Formby CCG that attained 100% performance against the 72 hour period. 12 CCGs (12.6%) posted performance of 60% or below in the same month, including NHS Leeds CCG at 32% and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG at 36%.

Chart 1 below shows the full national picture on performance against the 80% standard for the available period of data from October 2020. Chart 2 then illustrates the full range of CCG performance in January 2022.

Chart 1 – Percentage of patients followed-up within 72 hours of discharge, England

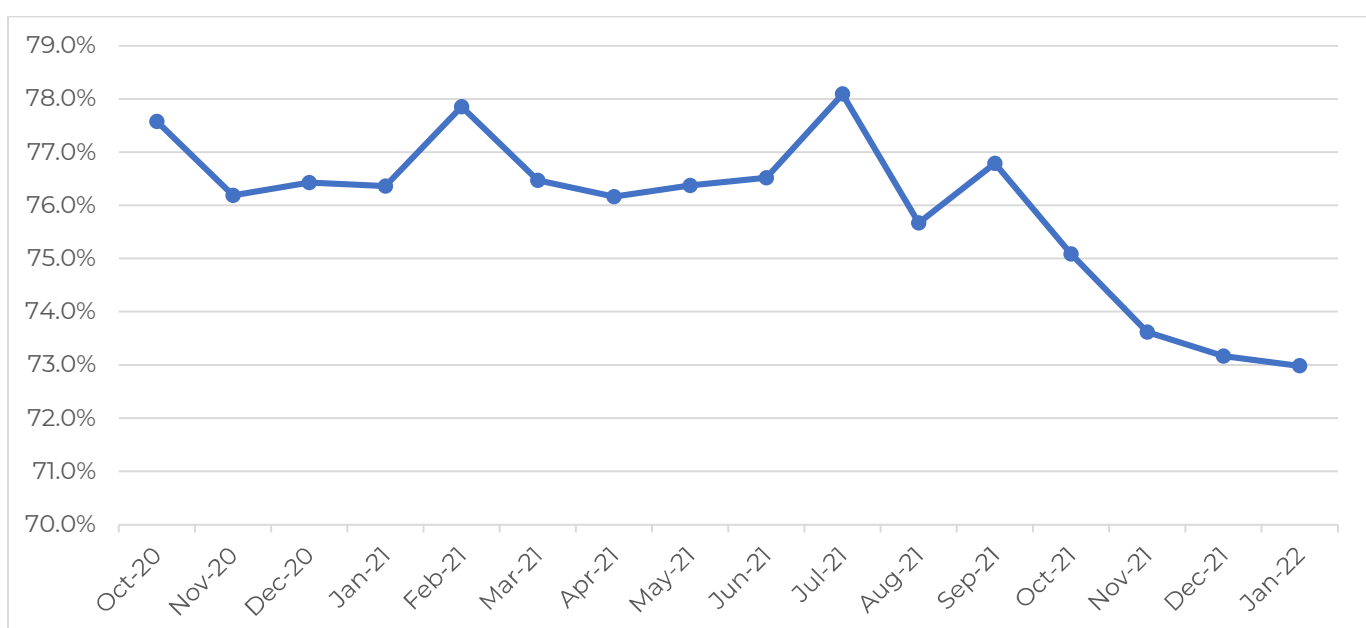
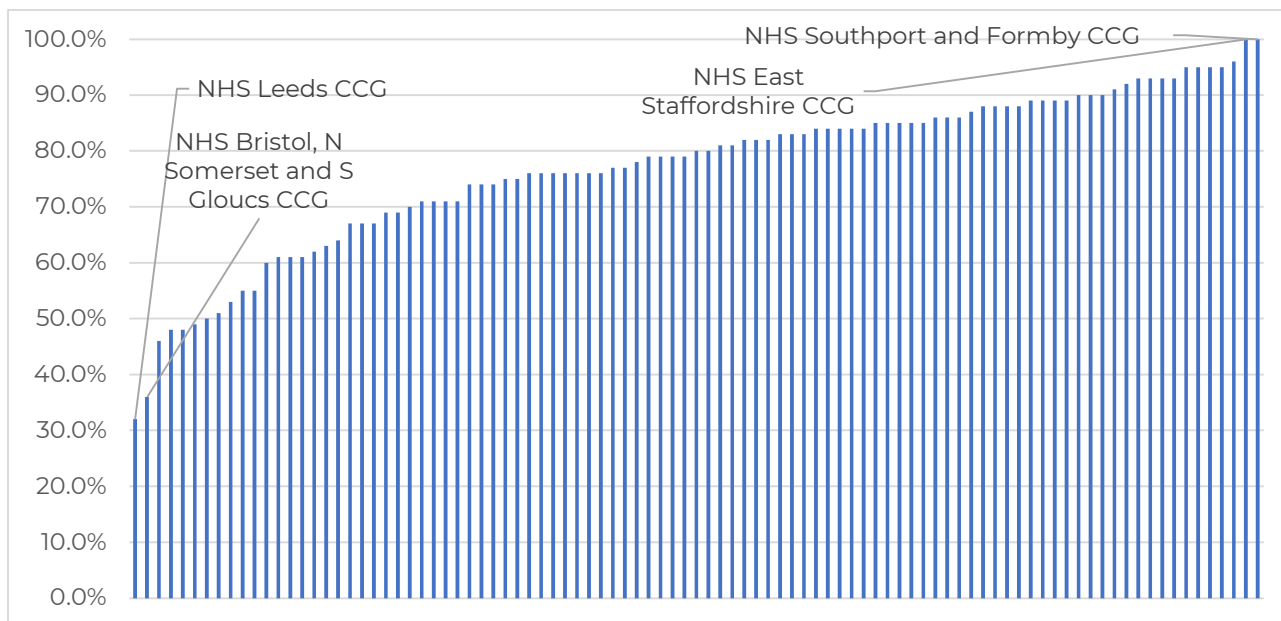


Chart 2 – CCG performance against the 72 hour standard, January 2022



What was the state of play the previous month and one year earlier?

Performance against the standard in December 2021 was the previous low point across the available period, at 73.2% (4,158 of 5,683). 52 of 93 CCGs (55.9%) with eligible cases in that point did however meet the national standard, including NHS Bassetlaw CCG where 100% of patients were followed-up within the three days. 12 CCG areas had performance of 60% or below, with NHS Leeds CCG again struggling the most to meet the standard, at 39%.

While performance in January 2021 was better than the corresponding month for this year, at 76.4%, it should be noted that only a minority of the then 132 CCGs with eligible cases attained the standard threshold (60 or 45.5%). Four CCG areas achieved 100% - NHS Fareham and Gosport CCG (now part of NHS Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight CCG), NHS South Tyneside CCG, NHS Southport and Formby CCG and NHS Sunderland CCG. At the other end of the scale, 20 CCG areas (15.2%) posted performance of 60% or below, including NHS Morecambe Bay CCG at 29%, NHS Tower Hamlets CCG (now part of NHS North East London CCG) at 32% and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG at 36%.

It is also possible to compare performance in January 2022 with that of January 2021 for 84 CCGs that had eligible cases in both months and weren't subject to a merger from April 2021. 41 areas (48.8%) posted improved follow-up rates in January 2022 against that of January 2021, with 38 (45.2%) seeing declines and the remaining 5 posting identical performance in both months. The best year-on-year increases were seen in NHS Tameside and Glossop CCG (32 percentage points), NHS Cannock Chase CCG (26 percentage points) and NHS Buckinghamshire CCG (21 percentage points), whereas the most significant year-on-year declines were found in NHS Leeds CCG (45 percentage points), NHS Sheffield CCG (27 percentage points) and NHS Oldham CCG (25 percentage points).

Charts 3 and 4 below show the full range of performance against the standard in January 2021 and an illustration of the sharpest deteriorations in performance over the past year.

Chart 3 – CCG performance against the 72 hour standard, January 2021

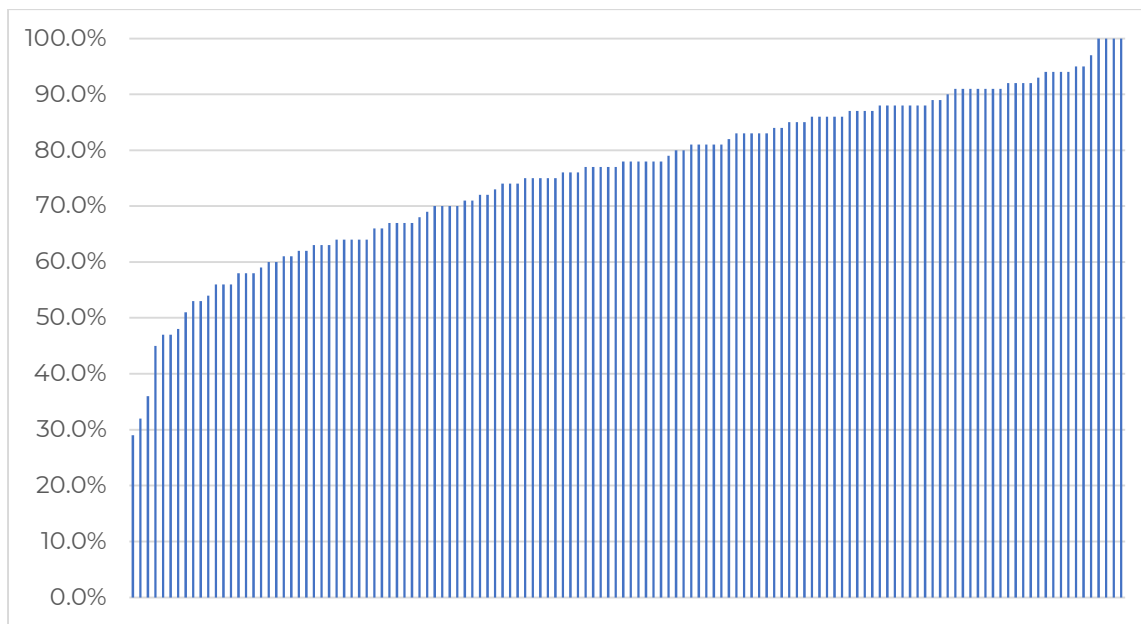
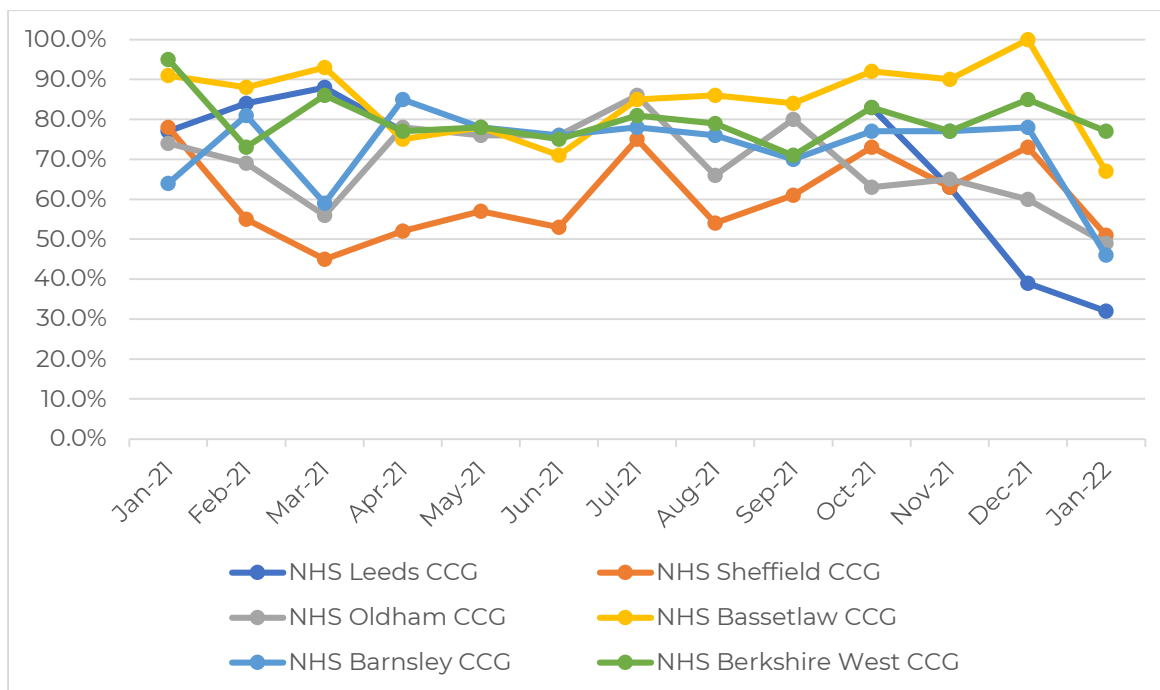


Chart 4 – CCGs with sharpest performance declines on discharge follow-up



How is performance reported for 72 hour post-discharge follow-up?

Monthly data is published by NHS Digital as part of its wider Mental Health Services Monthly Data series. The precise number of eligible cases and those followed up within the 72 hour window across England, however local numbers at CCG level are rounded to the nearest five to avoid the risk of patient identification. Percentages at CCG level are reported to the nearest whole number only without decimal places.

The Multiple Submission Window Model (MSWM) now in place allows local areas to resubmit data later in the year. This briefing is based on 'End of Year' updated data where available (up to and including September 2021 as of this publication).

When did services get closest to meeting the national standard?

A peak level was attained in July 2021, which was 78.1% in the revised 'End of Year' data published by NHS Digital. This was a month with the third highest number of patients

followed-up within the 72 hour expectation (5,055) and the fourth highest number of total eligible patients for follow-up (6,473) over the available period.

What next?

RCPsych will continue to analyse and monitor performance against the measure in future updates of Mental Health Watch to determine whether the system is delivering against the NHS Standard Contract commitment.

Sources

All of the performance data has been extracted from NHS Digital's Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics dataset.²

¹ NHS England and Improvement, NHS Standard Contract 2022/23, 2022. Available online: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/nhs-standard-contract/22-23/> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

² NHS Digital, Mental Health Services Monthly Dataset, 2022. Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics> [Accessed on 5 May 2022].