

Time in the unstable phase - revised benchmark

PCOC worked with participating services in 2009 to develop the first set of national benchmarks which were the subject of extensive consultation at three benchmarking workshops in 2009 to which all participating services were invited. Three benchmarks for time in the unstable phase were introduced as a result:

- Benchmark 2.1: 85% of patients remain in the unstable phase for less than 7 days – first phase of episode.
- Benchmark 2.2: 90% of patients remain in the unstable phase for less than 7 days – not first phase of episode.
- Benchmark 2.3: The median time in the unstable phase is 2 days or less.

The three benchmarks have been included in the six-monthly benchmarking reports since Report 8, covering the period July to December 2009.

For Report 8, the performance of the top 10 services for Benchmark 2.1 ranged from 89% to 100%. The performance of the top 10 services for Benchmark 2.2 was very similar, ranging from 91% to 100%.

Feedback from services attending the 2012 PCOC Benchmarking workshops was that benchmarks 2.1 and 2.2 should be combined as the first phase/not first phase split did not provide any additional information. There was also general feedback that the 'less than 7 days' timeframe did not represent best practice and should be reduced.

Analysis of data for Report 13 (covering the period January to June 2012) identified that setting the benchmark at 90% for a length of unstable phase of 3 days or less resulted in a similar level of performance for the top 10 services as was achieved in 2009 for benchmarks 2.1 and 2.2, ranging from 91% to 100%. It has therefore been agreed that it is appropriate to define the new benchmark as:

- Benchmark 2: 90% of patients are in the unstable phase for 3 days or less.

The table below indicates the impact of this change, by comparing the percentage of patient phases (across all services) and the percentage of services meeting the old and the new benchmarks.

	Benchmark 2.1		Benchmark 2.2		Benchmark 2
	Report 8	Report 13	Report 8	Report 13	Report 13
Patient phases meeting benchmark	66%	83%	73%	84%	66%
Services meeting benchmark	23%	54%	20%	45%	12%

This new benchmark prompted reconsideration of Benchmark 2.3 (median time in the unstable phase for 2 days or less) which can be re-framed as '50% of patients remain in the unstable phase for 2 days or less'. Expressed in those terms, this benchmark is considered to be redundant and has been removed from the suite of PCOC benchmarks.

The new (amalgamated) benchmark will be implemented as of Report 14 (covering the period July to December 2012).