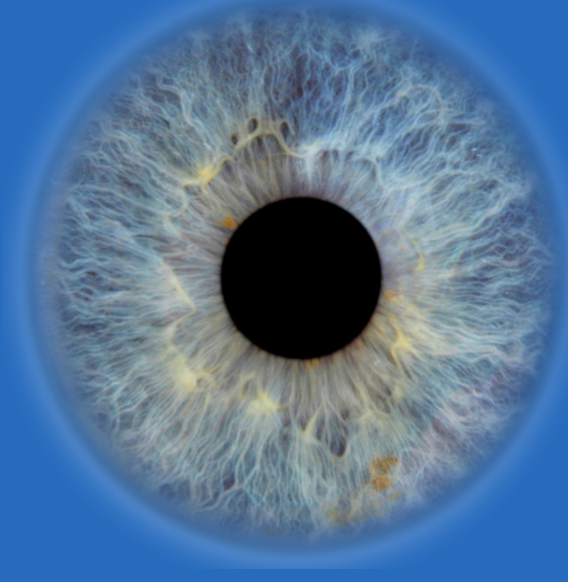


# CATARACT REFERRAL TO TREATMENT WAITING TIMES: PRE-COVID-19, OCTOBER 2021 AND NOW

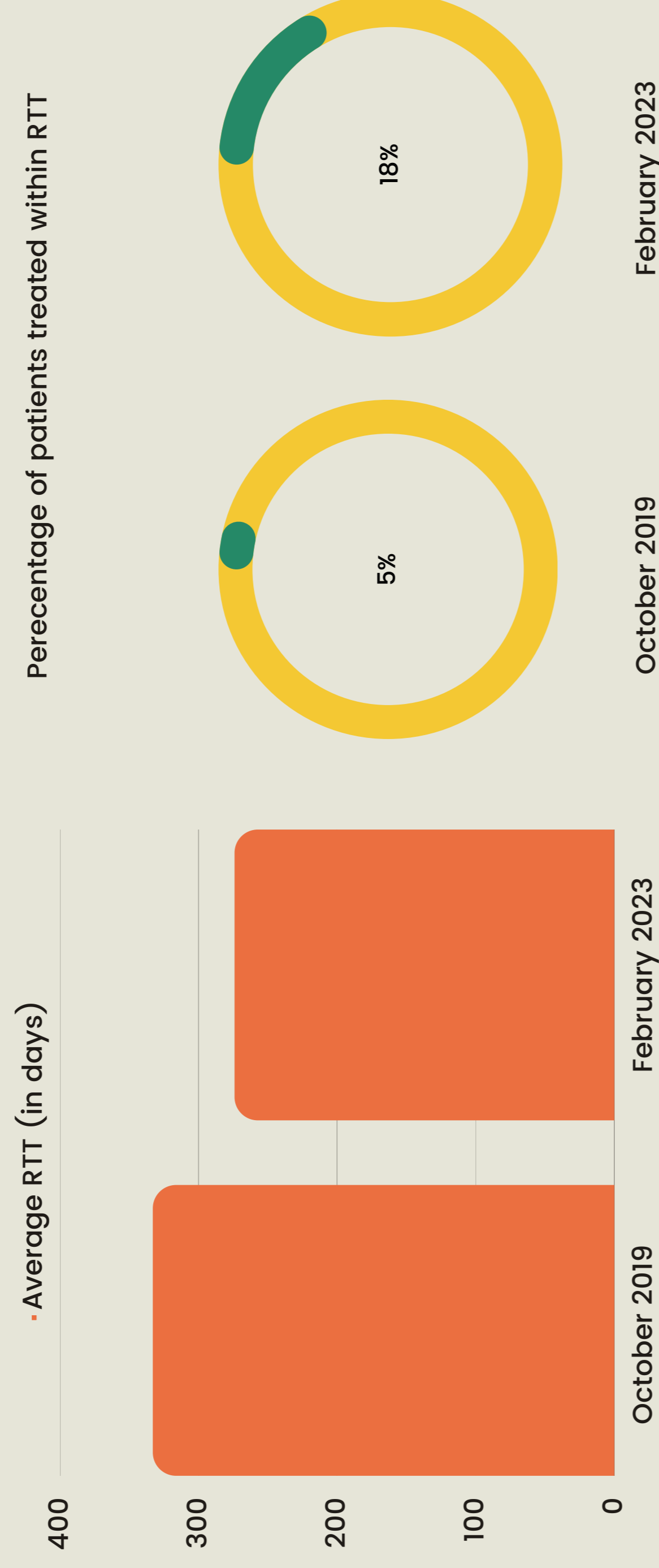
## A Quality Improvement project

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## RESULTS

**SINCE OCTOBER 2019, BY GAINING BACK THEATRE TIME, THE RTT WAIT TIME HAS ALREADY IMPROVED BY 59 DAYS (8.4 WEEKS)**



## BACKGROUND

- In England, the National Health Service (NHS) gives patients the right to access certain services within a maximum waiting time of eighteen weeks. These standards are set by the NHS Commissioning Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups Regulations 2012.
- Due to the impact of COVID-19, the County Durham, and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) cataract service has been severely impacted, mainly from reduced theatre time given to ophthalmology consultants. Thus, this has led to a reduction in the number of cataract surgeries taking place and therefore longer waiting times for patients
- The results from our primary audit, which revealed extensive patient waiting times, was presented to clinical governance and since January 2023 extra theatre sessions have been granted.

## AIMS

- To highlight the RTT-18 week guidance is not being met, since theatre time has been reduced due to COVID-19
- To gain back theatre time
- To reduce waiting times again to help reach RTT-18 week target

## METHOD

- A retrospective study to compare cataract RTT waiting times; pre-COVID-19, October 2021 and now, based upon the rules set by the Department of Health's RTT waiting time guidance.
- A sample size of three hundred patients was used: one hundred from October 2019, one hundred from the same week in October 2021 and one hundred from February 2023 when new theatre time was granted. Tests used within the audit were the average, range, median, and mode

**THE PERCENTAGE OF PATIENTS TREATED WITHIN THE RTT 8-WEEK GUIDANCE IMPROVED BY THIRTEEN PERCENT**

## CONCLUSION

- Overall, the original study highlighted that the majority of patients in CDDFT requiring cataract surgery are not receiving consultant led treatment within the 18-week RTT guidance.
- By using the evidence from our original audit, increased ophthalmology theatre time was pushed for at clinical governance. Since gaining back lost theatre time in January 2023 our RTT times have already improved by 8.4 weeks (approximately 2 months).
- Despite COVID being 3 years ago, we have not regained full capacity. HES (Health Episode Statistics) is unable to keep on top of RTT because of complex patient mix and lack of capacity.
- Treating all patients within an 18-week RTT is an ambitious task however, by taking necessary steps it is achievable and we hope to continue to reduce wait times with the necessary cataract theatre lists now in place.