

## Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Health

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA t 020 7219 8250 e andy.burnham.mp@parliament.uk

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE  
UK Statistics Authority  
1 Drummond Gate  
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05 November 2014

Dear Andrew

### GP NUMBERS

I have become increasingly concerned about what I believe to be an inaccurate use of statistics on GP numbers. Specifically statements have been made by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Health that have the effect of implying that there are 1,000 more GPs in England since the General Election.

There have been a number of examples of these statements, including at Prime Minister's Questions both today and in July.

- *"There are 1,000 more GPs today than there were when I became Prime Minister."*  
David Cameron, Prime Minister's Questions, 9 July 2014<sup>1</sup>
- *"We have 1,000 more GPs than we had when his [Labour MP Jamie Reed] party was in power."*  
Jeremy Hunt, Health Questions, 15 July 2014<sup>2</sup>
- *"There are 1,000 more GPs than when I became Prime Minister"*  
David Cameron, Good Morning Britain, 30 September 2014<sup>3</sup>
- *"There are 1,000 more GPs across the country than there were in 2010"*  
David Cameron, Prime Minister's Questions, 5 November 2014<sup>4</sup>

The official source of GP numbers is the annual National Health Service General and Personal Medical Services workforce census, published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre, which shows the number of general practitioners working in the NHS in England as at 30 September each year.

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Hansard, 9 July 2014, c287

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons Hansard, 15 July 2015, c662

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.itv.com/news/update/2014-09-30/cameron-pledges-to-bolster-gp-surgery-staffing/>

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons Hansard, 5 Nov 2014

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The last available figure from when the previous Government was in power is therefore September 2009, while the current figure is from September 2013.

The number of full-time equivalent GPs in September 2009 and September 2013 are shown in the table below. You will note that there were 36 fewer GPs on a full-time equivalent measure in September 2013 compared to September 2009 and 356 fewer on a headcount measure.

	Headcount			FTE		
	Sept 2009	Sept 2013	Change	Sept 2009	Sept 2013	Change
GPs	35,917	35,561	-356	32,111	32,075	-36

Source: Health and Social Care Information Centre, General and Personal Medical Services, England - 2003-2013, As at 30 September

I have two specific concerns about the Prime Minister's use of statistics in this case:

- First, that the Prime Minister is including trainees in the figure for the number of GPs, even though when reporting the number of GPs the Health and Social Care Information Centre excludes registrars: "*Various types of medical practitioners work in General Practice. The term 'practitioner' in this bulletin is defined as all general medical practitioners excluding Registrars...*" (Health and Social Care Information Centre, 'General and Personal Medical Services: England 2003-13')
- Second, that the Prime Minister is using data from September 2010, which was not the number of GPs when he "*became Prime Minister*" or when Labour "*was in power*". In particular, we know that there was an exodus of GPs in September 2010, at a time of deep discontent and poor morale over the new Government's proposed health re-organisation.

In light of these concerns, I would be grateful if you could advise on the accuracy of recent statements made by the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



RT HON ANDY BURNHAM