



The Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP

Member of Parliament for North Norfolk

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Sir David Norgrove
Chair
UK Statistics Authority

*Please quote the reference in all
correspondence with this office*

Our Ref: NL33470

David.Norgrove@Statistics.gov.uk

15th February 2018

Dear Sir David,

Re: NHS England's official response to new research on 'Early Intervention in Psychosis'

I am writing to raise concerns over NHS England's public response to new research on access and waiting time standards for 'Early Intervention in Psychosis'.

I recently conducted a review of the implementation of the new treatment standards, which came into effect in April 2016, based on Freedom of Information requests to every NHS mental health trust in England. The data we received from 45 trusts between August and November 2017 indicated that the implementation of the new standards has been variable across the country, and that most areas are not able to provide an Early Intervention in Psychosis service that complies with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

I have enclosed a copy of our analysis and a spreadsheet of the FOI responses from mental health trusts, for your information. Among the key findings were:

- Mental health trusts are investing, on average, just half of the amount NHS England estimates is needed to provide Early Intervention in Psychosis in line with NICE guidelines.
- A quarter of mental health trusts place age restrictions on access to their Early Intervention in Psychosis services in breach of the national standard.
- Last year, in many parts of the country, only a small percentage of patients received the different treatments and services that a NICE-compliant EIP team should be able to deliver.
- When mental health trusts were asked outright whether their EIP teams are "able to deliver the full NICE-concordant packages of care, in accordance with national guidelines, to all patients referred to the EIP service", only 29% said that they were able to do so.

The analysis was [reported by BBC News](#) on February 1st. NHS England's response to the research, which was quoted in the BBC online and in television broadcasts, said that "the analysis inevitably gives only a partial and dated picture of progress".

I would welcome your views on this response, which I believe is without any foundation. In my view the response was designed to undermine the analysis and to cast doubt over its veracity. I do not believe that public bodies should engage in such tactics. I would stress the following points:



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- The information that we presented to the BBC was an accurate representation of the data provided by NHS mental health trusts.
- The analysis was balanced and highlighted several areas of good practice.
- The findings of the research were timely and relevant. The Freedom of Information requests were submitted in July 2017 (Month 4 of 2017-18) and related to:
 - Funding, expected caseloads, eligibility criteria and compliance with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines in 2017-18, the second year after the standards came into effect; and
 - Funding, waiting times, and access to EIP treatments and services in the last full financial year (2016-17).
- The response from NHS England implies that it holds more up-to-date information and/or that the situation has improved materially since the research was conducted. To the best of my knowledge, this is not true in either case.
- Our findings were corroborated by clinicians and patients who were interviewed by the BBC as part of its coverage. NHS employees involved in the delivery of Early Intervention in Psychosis have also confirmed to me that the analysis accurately reflects the state of play across the country.
- My office has received no complaints or concerns about the accuracy of the data.

As I am sure you will agree, it is important that Members of Parliament and the media are able to scrutinise NHS performance against national standards, and that public bodies should respond appropriately to any concerns raised. My view is that NHS England's response is misleading the public by denying the veracity or relevance of my analysis of data provided by NHS mental health trusts. It amounts to an attempt to close down legitimate public debate about the implementation of the new treatment standards.

I hope that you will investigate this and I look forward to your response as a matter of urgency.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Rt. Hon. Norman Lamb MP
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