
Director General for Regulation

Mark Svenson
Head of Profession for Statistics
NHS England

17 May 2018

Dear Mark

Thank you for your correspondence of 7 February, outlining the actions you are taking to try to bring greater clarity to the reporting of A&E activity and performance since October 2017.

NHS England's subsequent publication of the Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) Attendances commentary on 8 March helpfully explains how you have tried to estimate the aggregate impact of the data collection changes since October 2017. There is also a comprehensive account of the methods used to calculate the aggregate impact and the fact that the January 2018 and February 2018 releases do not include any UEC data. You have also transparently published all the correspondence pertaining to the episode, for which I commend you.

I note that NHS Improvement's letter to the NHS of 25 January mentions that clinical practices in urgent and emergency care have evolved and that the principles for their measurement have yet to be agreed. The statistics you produce must reflect what happens operationally. Users of A&E data would welcome clarity on the evolving UEC services and whether they fall within the remit of A&E measurement.

I am therefore disappointed that A&E data collection guidance, based on agreed principles, has still not been published. This uncertainty continues to undermine the public confidence in the official statistics compiled from that data (*A&E Attendances and Emergency Admissions*). Resolving this uncertainty would be the best way for you to meet the needs of external users, particularly to demonstrate the trustworthiness of your statistics and to ensure you are transparent about future plans for these statistics.

To help rebuild public confidence support this, we would expect you to prominently publish:

- an explanation of the issues and planned next steps, including timescales to be published somewhere prominent
- appropriate cautions provided to users to support their interpretation of the statistics; and
- any revisions to the published statistics to be presented in an easily accessible way, with the impact of these revisions explained

I look forward to seeing these aspects addressed in the near future.

This set of concerns goes beyond the official statistics publication, since it relates to operational guidance and policies. I am therefore copying in Ian Dalton, CEO of NHSI, and Pauline Philip, National Director of Urgent and Emergency Care.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation