
Director General for Regulation

Iain Bell
Deputy National Statistician
(by email)

16 October 2018

Dear Iain,

I am writing to you relating to correspondence we have had with Professor Danny Dorling, which we have [published on our website](#) today.

Professor Dorling raised queries about the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Quarterly mortality report, England: April to June 2018 publication. The first concern was the reference to a "heatwave" in relation to changes in mortality. I believe that your comments about the impact of external temperature changes (both heat and cold) upon mortality are reasonable. You are clear that you do not confirm that a heatwave is the cause of the change in number of deaths, noting that "The question of deaths which might be attributable to a heatwave will be addressed in our next quarterly release." I encourage you to continue to work to add insight to your publications in a clear and impartial way.

Professor Dorling also questioned the role of Public Health England (PHE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) in the production of your Mortality Reports. In the Quarterly mortality report, England April – June 2018 it states that "This publication was produced with support from Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care".

We welcome collaboration across organisations and believe this sort of engagement has potential to increase the value of the statistics. We have no reason to believe that the independence of ONS statistics has been compromised by this collaboration, but were unable to find information on the nature of this support within the report or associated information. Your team have told us that the support is from members of the Government Statistical Service working within these organisations, who are also bound by the Code of Practice for Statistics. I encourage ONS to provide more information on the roles PHE and DHSC play in the production of your mortality statistics in the publication.

I am copying this letter to Chris White, Neil Bannister and Ben Humberstone.

Your sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation