

Ed Humpherson (by email)

17 May 2017

Dear Ed

Thank you for your letter of 20 February which raised issues regarding Accident and Emergency (A&E) data.

You asked us, in partnership, to provide you with an update on our review of the points you raised in your letter. We have given these points careful consideration alongside the plans we already had in place to improve the coherence of our A&E statistics.

Timing of daily and monthly A&E performance data

We accept that public interest in A&E data and in particular, data describing performance against the 4 hour access standard has increased significantly in recent years.

To reduce the risk of leaks, and to address the issue of public interest, NHS England intends to make significant improvements to the timetable for non-elective data. In the first instance there will be a reduction in the time lag for A&E data from period end to publication from around 6 weeks to around 2 weeks and this will be achieved through streamlining all stages of the timetable, but primarily through asking the NHS for the data much earlier in the production cycle. It is intended to make these changes in time for the publication of NHS performance data in August. This data release will cover A&E performance during the month of July. It is also intended to include the more timely weekly NHS111 data in the August publication. In addition the ambulance data collection timetable is being reviewed with the aim of also including it in this more timely package of non-elective data.

Given the intention for the more timely release of NHS England's A&E monthly data, and the fact that type 3 coverage is more complete than the interim collections, the NHS England monthly data will remain as the 'official statistics' source for A&E performance.

Clinical Quality indicators

In addition to the above NHS England changes, NHS Digital will reduce the time-lag for the A&E Clinical Quality indicators from 10 weeks to 6 weeks from August (covering data from the month of June). Recent Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) processing efficiencies have already delivered improvements of around 2 weeks, from 12 weeks to 10 weeks. The remaining lag includes the time for providers to submit the detailed records that underpin the indicators; the scope for further improvements will also be explored. As well as publishing the indicators a month earlier than previously, NHS Digital will look to synchronise publication with NHS England's NHS performance data from October onwards.

Annual data

These processing efficiencies will help accelerate the release schedule for annual data. Therefore we will be in a position in October 2017 to publish the 2016/17 annual A&E statistics. This publication contains a wider set of breakdowns and measures than monthly publications, and also presents finalised data. Earlier publication will benefit users because it means data will be available in advance of the next winter period, rather than during winter, as has been the case in previous years.

We have agreed that this year the annual publication, previously drawing on HES A&E data only and produced by NHS Digital, will be jointly produced with NHS England. The joint production will draw on NHS England's monthly A&E data as well as HES A&E data and in so doing will aim to create a more coherent picture of the A&E landscape.

Longer term developments

In addition there are some longer term developments that will bring further opportunities to align and consolidate:

- Implementation of the proposed new Emergency Care Data Set (ECDS), facilitating new analysis of A&E activity.
- A push to encourage minor injury units/A&E walk-in centres to submit administrative data to NHS Digital via HES and ECDS, to improve completeness.
- In time, the removal of the requirement for A&E providers to submit monthly sit-reps, and the replacement of this data with official A&E statistics from HES and ultimately ECDS.
- Development of new indicators as part of the Urgent and Emergency Care review

We consider that these developments as a whole will significantly improve both the timeliness and coherence around A&E activity and performance statistics for the benefit of users, patients and the public.

Yours sincerely,

Noel Gordon: Chair, NHS Digital
Sir Malcolm Grant: Chair, NHS England
Ed Smith: Chair, NHS Improvement

Cc: Chris Wormald: Permanent Secretary, Department of Health
Simon Stevens: Chief Executive, NHS England
Jim Mackey: Chief Executive, NHS Improvement

A&E data collection and release in July 2017 – before improvements

April

Trust A&E activity for April recorded on hospitals' systems

May

Trusts complete clinical coding of A&E records.
Submitted by most Trusts to NHS Digital SUS+ via A&E CDS

June

Data cleaned and processed by NHS Digital into HES A&E data

July

Monthly A&E CQIs for April derived and published by NHS Digital (**late July**)

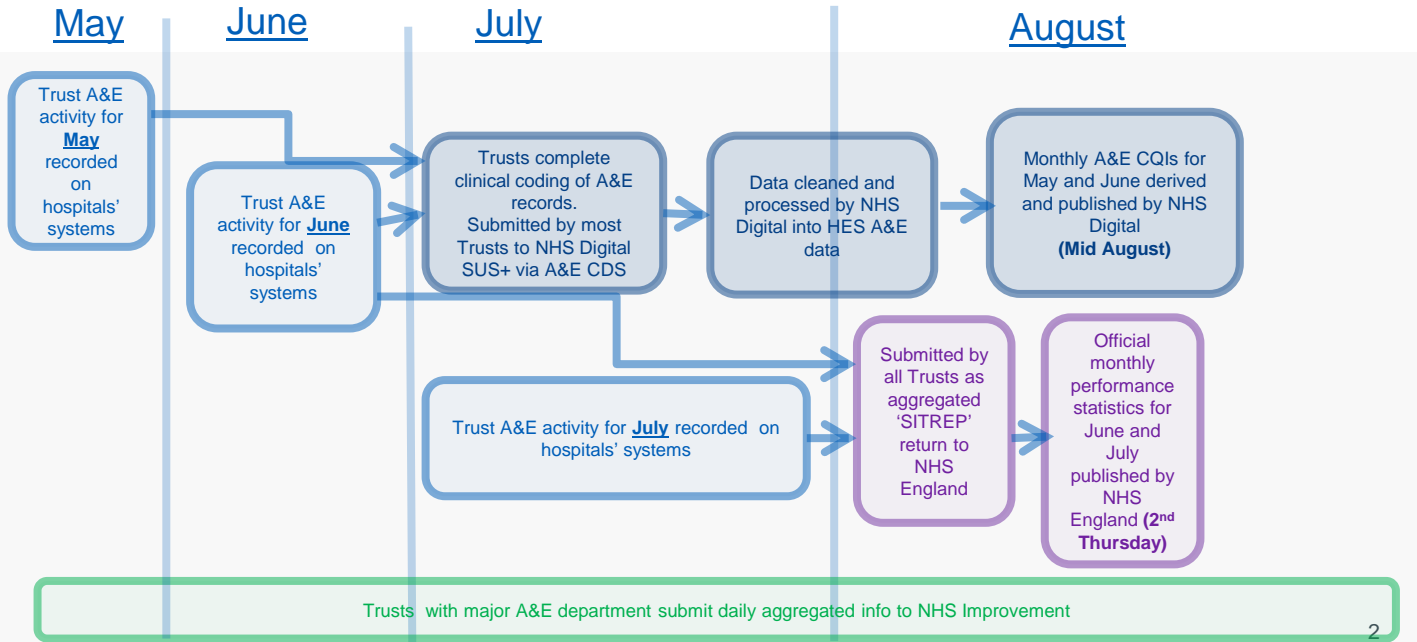
Trust A&E activity for May recorded on hospitals' systems

Submitted by all Trusts as aggregated 'SITREP' return to NHS England

Official monthly performance statistics for May published by NHS England (**2nd Thursday**)

Trusts with major A&E department submit daily aggregated info to NHS Improvement

A&E data collection and release - August 2017 – improved timeliness of data



A&E data collection and release - October 2017 – same day publication

August

September

October

Trust A&E activity for **August** recorded on hospitals' systems

Trusts complete clinical coding of A&E records. Submitted by most Trusts to NHS Digital SUS+ via A&E CDS

Data cleaned and processed by NHS Digital into HES A&E data

Monthly A&E CQIs derived and published for August by NHS Digital
(2nd Thursday)

Trust A&E activity for **September** recorded on hospitals' systems

Submitted by all Trusts as aggregated 'SITREP' return to NHS England

Official monthly performance statistics published for September by NHS England
(2nd Thursday)

Trusts with major A&E department submit daily aggregated info to NHS Improvement