

News Release

28 November 2018

Today, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has published its [report](#) on “The Importance of involving statisticians in the evolution of NHS Performance Measures.”

This report focuses on accident and emergency (A&E) statistics in England, Scotland and Wales. It summarises four cases that OSR has looked at over the last two years involving these statistics, and draws out common themes and recommendations.

The four cases are: [Changes to what should be included in A and E returns](#); [Problems at NHS Lothian](#); [Leaks](#); and [Comparison of 12 hour waits in England and Wales](#). These cases show how OSR’s recommendations serve to improve the trustworthiness, quality and value of these important NHS performance measures.

There are two key conclusions for decision makers in the NHS and for policy makers:

- support the work of statisticians and other analysts in the health system. These analysts can help highlight risks to data quality, provide assurance on the usefulness of the performance measures, and advise on changes to performance measurement systems; and
- ensure that the purpose of these performance measures is clear.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, said: “A&E performance statistics perform a hugely valuable role. They don’t just support decision makers – they also are crucial in informing the public about the performance of the NHS. Our report highlights how producers of statistics can draw on the expertise of statisticians to minimise the challenges facing these high-profile statistics: misunderstanding, misstatement and misleading use.”

Notes to Editors

- [The Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\)](#) is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. We provide independent regulation of all official statistics produced in the UK assessed against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).
- The Code of Practice for statistics applies to everyone in an organisation producing official statistics, including senior leaders, policy professionals, communications staff and other analysts. This underlying data is important to performance measures, targets and official statistics – essential for informing performance management systems and policy.
- Official statistics should be compiled to the highest standards of quality to ensure decision-making is based on sound evidence. All statistics should be sourced from accurate data and quality assured, with rigour analysis and insight. Anything published should include clearly explained methods of compilation. If these fundamental principles are not met, then this can lead to data that is not fit for purpose, leading to poor understanding and decision making.

Statistics are an essential public asset. OSR ensures public confidence in the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics produced by government. For more information please contact Suzanne Halls on 07411 212300, email suzanne.halls@statistics.gov.uk or visit the [OSR website](#)