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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Jess McGregor, Director of Adult Social Care  
Julie Billett, Director of Public Health  
Camden Council  
(by email)

24 July 2020

Dear Ms Billett and Ms McGregor

**COVID-19: number of outbreaks in care homes – management information published by Public Health England<sup>1</sup>**

Thank you very much for your letter of 24th June to the UK Statistics Authority. My team at the Office for Statistics Regulation have considered the matter in detail and talked extensively with the team responsible for the statistics at Public Health England (PHE).

We agree with your concerns and, whilst the information presented has been compiled at speed with the intention of transparency, there are a lot of important details about the types of setting that have been lost.

The dataset is released with granular information at the local authority level, which would be of great use to stakeholders; however, the misleading use of the term “care home” in this context gives the data less utility than it should have. The data is sourced by PHE from all supported living facilities and it should be described as such, to make most sense for the experienced users. We have suggested that PHE amend the title of the release to better reflect this.

We agree there is an erroneous calculation of proportions, using mismatching numerator and denominator data. The numerator and denominator are not comparable, because non-Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered care settings are included in the numerator, but not the denominator. This fact is noted in the metadata on the landing page and in the data tables. The use of a denominator that underestimates the total number of facilities at risk of suspected or confirmed outbreaks, leads to over-inflation of the proportion of facilities with a suspected or confirmed outbreak. My team has explored with PHE the use of the small denominator and they are considering how to improve the calculation with the data they currently collect.

There is no explanation of the major limitations of these statistics on the infographic provided by PHE. The infographic includes the proportion of outbreaks and the number of care homes for each PHE centre but, as noted above, this denominator does not include all settings at risk captured in the numerator. PHE is considering removing the proportion numerical and replacing it with an indicator calculated using comparable numerator and denominator.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/covid-19-number-of-outbreaks-in-care-homes-management-information>

We agree with your concern that the presentation as it stands makes it difficult to identify whether a region has supported living facilities with repeated outbreaks which may require further interventions and support. My team has explored with PHE what improvements are possible to the data and presentation to make the information more useful for a range of stakeholders. PHE assures us that it has identified more data that it can use to present a more comprehensive publication and that this will be released later in 2020. In the interim, we have asked PHE to engage publicly with stakeholders to let them know about proposals to change the current publication and obtain stakeholders' views on the content, timing and presentation of the new material.

We agree with your third concern and have asked PHE to improve the information about the publication itself (the metadata), by publishing details of the data sources, the methodology, the quality assurance processes and the strengths and limitations of the data. This will help a range of stakeholders to decide if the publication is the right material for their needs.

Thank you very much for drawing this to our attention and will closely follow PHE's progress with this work.

I am copying this letter to Clare Griffiths, Head of Profession for Statistics at PHE and Julia Verne, Head of Clinical Epidemiology at PHE.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation