

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
UK Statistics Authority
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By email

Dear Ed

NHS Digital remains committed to producing high quality Official Statistics, management information and other releases to support the health and social care sectors, and each year we publish around 300 statistical releases across almost 100 series of Official Statistics.

Our long-standing General Ophthalmic statistics relate to Activity and Workforce and we have published these as two distinct reports for several years. The statistics were re-assessed in 2012 and retained the National Statistics designation at that stage.

However, we wrote to you in 2017 about the General Ophthalmic Activity statistics and you supported our proposal that these be released solely as management information rather than as National Statistics.

We have recently undertaken a public consultation to review our General Ophthalmic Statistics and while we recognise that there is a very small user base, nonetheless we believe that these statistics cater for specific and specialist needs that cannot be met elsewhere. As a result, we will continue to produce General Ophthalmic Workforce Statistics for England.

However, we have identified some significant concerns about the data completeness and coverage, which undermine the overall quality of these statistics and will affect the next release. In view of the fact that the National Statistics designation provides assurance to users of the quality, trustworthiness and value of the release, and given that we do not believe the data quality supports such assurance, we would be grateful if you would support our request to remove the National Statistics status from this release.

Over the coming year, the underlying data source for the General Ophthalmic Statistics is transferring to new provider and the entire collection will be undergoing significant change. Although the structure and content of the new data set has not yet been confirmed, we expect to be able to provide richer and more useful statistics once the new collection is properly established.

In the meantime, we will publish General Ophthalmic Workforce Statistics for the 2019 calendar year as a final release using the original data source, highlighting the data quality issues as necessary, and continue to work closely with our data suppliers and stakeholders to improve the quality and reliability of future publications.

Yours sincerely



Chris Roebuck
Chief Statistician