
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Iain Bell
Deputy National Statistician and Director General for Population and Public Policy
Office for National Statistics
(by email)

27 November 2020

Dear Iain

Coronavirus (COVID-19) weekly insights: Key health indicators in England

I am writing to endorse your development of a [summary of latest COVID-19 indicators](#). Data around COVID-19 are of high public and media interest. Multiple sources of data and differences in these can impact on trust in the data. Drawing together the different sources to produce a coherent narrative can overcome this and improve understanding.

We welcome the development of this new publication, especially the collaboration between multiple organisations which allows for a shared view and supports public trust in this narrative. In order to maximise public value in this output it is essential that this positive collaboration between organisations continues and that good communication is maintained between all partners.

The initial publication covers only English data and initially focuses on breaking these data down by age and region. It is good that you are looking to expand this to the devolved nations and their associated data, and to include additional breakdowns such as for ethnicity and occupation. In the short term, there is a risk that the England-only focus could cause confusion for users in the devolved nations. ONS should take steps to reduce this confusion by making it clear why you have chosen this initial approach.

We look forward to seeing the publication develop and we will be glad to provide further advice and support.

I am also happy to confirm the exemption from the Code of Practice for Statistics' standard publication time of 9:30am to permit a later release time of noon each Friday for these statistics. This will allow publication to be as timely as possible given the timings for release of some of the contributory data.

I am copying this letter to Ruth Studley, Esther Sutherland and Adam Evans of the ONS Health Analysis and Pandemic Insight team, to Paul Cleary, Director for Analysis at the Joint Biosecurity Centre, to Clare Griffiths, Head of Profession at Public Health England

and to Stephen Balchin, Head of Profession for Statistics at the Department of Health and Social Care.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation