
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Lucy Vickers
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department of Health and Social Care
(by email)

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Dear Lucy

Rapid Review of Monthly Adult Social Care statistics for England

As you are aware, we recently undertook a review of the [Monthly Adult Social Care statistics](#) for England, published by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). This letter summarises our findings and outlines our recommendations for further improvement to enhance compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The impact of COVID-19 on people in care settings – care home residents, staff and recipients of domiciliary care – has rightly received significant public attention. In June 2020, we published a [statement](#) recognising speedy improvements to reporting on the sector. We also called on statistics producers to continue to work together and present a coherent picture of the impact of the pandemic. Statisticians in DHSC have worked hard to develop these statistics in response to questions about the pandemic.

The compendium brings together a range of data about adult social care in one output, to enable users to start to assess the ways the sector has responded to the challenges of the pandemic. The output shows, in aggregate, how the sector providers have been able to adhere to infection control practices, how the workforce has been protected and compensated, and the number of staff and residents tested and vaccinated against COVID-19. This is to be highly commended.

The commentary would provide more value if the impact of these interventions could be placed in a wider context. For example, working with other statistics producers, and referencing wider research, would allow users to develop a better understanding of COVID-19 in the various settings, in relation to the practices to control the infection that have taken place.

Prominent notes about how the statistics should and shouldn't be used, or compared, are included in the bulletin. However, the fact that the statistics themselves are presented away from these warnings, could lead to confusion for users. DHSC should seek users' views on the presentation of the bulletin, and act on feedback accordingly to ensure the caveats are clear.

Detailed data tables are published, with information down to local authority level, and this allows users to benchmark local performance and hold authorities to account. The statistical bulletin is very clear that the statistics are experimental, and are still undergoing development, with further assessments of user need. DHSC should engage more with a wide range of users to understand how they use the statistics, allow them to contribute to the development of the statistics and explain how the statisticians will be acting on that feedback.

DHSC has published a comprehensive [document](#) outlining its methodology, but, to ensure the statistics meet users' expectations of quality, this should include details of any biases and risks to data quality. The document should also include the actions taken to mitigate the risks, such as the quality assurance methods that data suppliers and DHSC perform, as well as DHSC use of our guidance on Quality Assessment of Administrative Data (QAAD). DHSC should also make reference to any plans for publication of the Reproducible Analytical Pipeline (RAP) code used for the production of these statistics.

Using the data collection tool called [Capacity Tracker](#) means that DHSC is relying on social care providers to self-report data voluntarily. This means there is a risk posed to the quality of the statistics by, for example, under-reporting or incomplete data submissions. DHSC has told us that it is working closely with the Care Quality Commission and other stakeholders to assess and mitigate these risks and will work towards improving the completeness and quality of the data.

My health and social care statistics team will continue to liaise with your statisticians over the coming weeks and I have copied this letter to Claire Beaton, lead statistician for the output, in DHSC.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation