
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Victoria Obudulu
Head of Profession for Statistics
UK Health Security Agency
(by email)

17 December 2021

Dear Victoria

Data to support statement made by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

I am writing to express my thanks to you and your team for the commitment you have shown to share data to support public understanding of COVID-19 in such a fast-moving environment. It is good to see publication of data to support the statement made by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in the House of Commons on Monday 13 December.

I note that most of the data quoted by the Secretary of State were published in the [Omicron daily overview](#), which commenced on 14 December 2021. This new Omicron daily overview provides vital information about the number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths involving the Omicron variant and will be an important source of information in the days and weeks to come as the impact of the variant is studied further.

However, in his statement, the Secretary of State also mentioned an estimate of the daily number of infections of COVID-19, which was initially also unsupported by data. This caused confusion and some speculation in the media, which distracts from the message the statistics are conveying.

An [explanation of the methodology](#) used to arrive at the daily number of infections was published on 16 December. OSR has previously made clear its [expectation](#) that data and methods should be made equally available to all before any planned statement is made. Transparency of data used to inform decisions is vital to public understanding and public confidence. In this case, the delay between the use of the figure and the publication of the data was unsatisfactory.

I understand that arrangements are being made to ensure that announcements of high importance such as this will be suitably supported by data, if not before, then as soon as possible afterwards. I appreciate the urgency of this particular situation meant that the statement used the most up-to-date data possible. But the general principles of

transparency should still apply. If, in future, we can support you in making the case with your colleagues for more immediate publication, we would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation