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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

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

6th April 2022

Dear Victoria

**COVID-19 vaccine uptake in frontline healthcare workers statistics**

Thank you for your correspondence (Annex to this letter) requesting to continue releasing the seasonal flu vaccine uptake statistics<sup>1,2,3</sup> at 2pm, rather than at 9:30am. This release time was agreed as an exemption to the Code of Practice for Statistics and formalised in a [letter my office published in November 2021](#).

As you have noted, following a consultation, [we will be amending practice T3.6 of the Code from 5th May 2022](#), to allow requests for alternative release times of official statistics. To ensure consistency for current users of the seasonal flu vaccine statistics, I am content to convert the existing exemption to an alternative release time, enabling future publications of these statistics to continue at 2pm.

You have also requested the alternative release time of 2pm for the forthcoming **COVID-19 vaccine uptake in frontline healthcare workers** statistics. Having considered your reasons for this change, I am assured that you have a good understanding of how the statistics are used, and how this will be enhanced through adopting an alternative release time. You have fully considered the compromise between allowing time for quality assurance and making statistics available as early as possible, and you are seeking to ensure that you can release statistics of suitable quality in a coherent and timely way. These measures will support a variety of users and uses and enable media queries to be handled effectively. Finally, you are ensuring users have good notice of the change in release time by seeking approval for a later release time well in advance of the release.

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<sup>1</sup> [Seasonal flu vaccine uptake in children of school age](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Seasonal flu and COVID-19 uptake in frontline healthcare workers](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Seasonal flu vaccine uptake in GP patients](#)

I am therefore content you have demonstrated the alternative release time will enable these statistics to better serve the public good.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Humpherson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation

Annex: correspondence from Victoria Obudulu

Dear Ed

Thank you for approving an exemption from the Code of Practice for Statistics' standard publication time of 9.30am to permit a later release time of 2.00pm for the following statistics:

- Seasonal flu vaccine uptake in children of school age
- Seasonal flu and COVID-19 uptake in frontline healthcare workers
- Seasonal flu vaccine uptake in GP patients

In line with your [policy for alternative release times for official statistics](#) , I am confirming that we would like to convert these release time exemptions to an alternative release time of 2.00pm.

In addition, I would like to request an alternative release time of 2.00pm for the 'COVID-19 vaccine uptake in frontline healthcare workers: monthly data'. These are published between March and August and are currently preannounced for publication at 9.30am. However I believe a change to a 2.00pm release time is necessary for the following reasons:

- **Coherence and orderly release.** Publishing at the same release time as the seasonal statistics above supports coherence, orderly release and minimises confusion for users who are already used to receiving these reports at 2.00pm.
- **Assured quality and timeliness.** These statistics are published monthly, with the data being delivered to the production team during the week preceding publication. Thursday is the earliest that the statistics can be ready but we are unable to commit to publication at 9:30am, because the team need that time for quality assurance on Thursday mornings because of the tight turnaround. The team has considered how to maintain the standard 9.30am release time. However, in practice the earliest possible 9:30 release time would be on Friday but the strong media interest in the figures would present handling challenges for the team, in effect forcing publication back to the following Tuesday at 9:30 to allow for pre-release access on Monday. Furthermore, public health intervention teams will be better served if the data is available to them at the same time as the [National flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports](#).

I would be grateful if you could indicate your support for this.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Obudulu

Head of Profession for Statistics, UK Health Security Agency