

---

**Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead**

Scott Heald  
Head of Profession for Statistics  
Scottish Ambulance Service  
(by email)

27 June 2022

Dear Scott

**Scottish Ambulance Service Unscheduled Care Operational Statistics**

I am writing to endorse the approach taken by the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) in developing new [operational statistics on unscheduled care](#). These statistics were first published in November 2021 in response to high public interest on the topic, particularly on the issue of ambulance response times. This information is also vital for decision-makers to understand and manage the demand on the ambulance service. By publishing these statistics SAS is supporting transparency, enabling individuals and organisations to reach informed decisions and answer important questions.

My team has conducted a rapid review of these statistics. We have reviewed the extent to which they have been produced in accordance with the Code of Practice's Trustworthiness, Quality and Value pillars, taking account of the timeframe in which SAS has set up these statistics. A summary of our findings is set out below, including recommendations for how SAS could further improve the statistics.

**Trustworthiness**

The statistics are released in an orderly fashion and SAS publishes a list of forthcoming publications, so users know when to expect the statistics. The statistics are produced weekly, including new data for the previous four weeks, of which the data for the most recent three weeks are provisional. Providing people with this up-to-date information allows the statistics to reflect current events and better inform public debate.

SAS gets statistical governance support from you and your team at Public Health Scotland. It was encouraging to hear how positive the team is about your support and to see that there are strong links between both organisations. It was also encouraging to hear the team's enthusiasm for refresher training on the [Code of Practice for Statistics, given there are new members in the team](#). My team would be very happy to support this if helpful.

**Quality**

SAS is due to make changes to the methodology it uses for response times to bring it in line with methods used across the rest of the UK. This is being communicated clearly to

users and will help with the comparability of data across the UK – something we know is important to many users of health care data.

Establishing links with producers of similar statistics across the UK would allow good practice to be shared and help ensure that there is consistency in how the statistics are being reported (for example, whether to report median or mean response times). SAS should also add explanations about the quality of the statistics to its outputs – for example, any limitations in data collection or reporting which users should be aware of, and information about uncertainty around the figures and comparability with statistics in other nations. Providing this kind of information will give users assurance that they can feel confident in using the statistics and support them to use the statistics appropriately.

## **Value**

SAS has done great work in making its reports accessible. The statistics are accessible in a variety of formats such as pdf, html and excel, supporting a range of uses and users of the statistics. All past reports and data tables are also made available in an archive on the SAS website. We recommend that SAS review some of the language used in its outputs to make it as accessible as possible to non-expert users (for example, the term unscheduled care itself may not be familiar to all users).

The statistics are presented in an objective way and include a useful background section which explores the context around the statistics such as discussing the Clinical Response Model (CRM). To provide more context and insight for users, it would be helpful to include the Scottish Government targets for response times, along with links to similar statistics produced across the UK.

We understand that SAS plans to continue to improve the way it presents the statistics by developing a dashboard and presenting trends. We strongly support these development plans but recognise this may take time to implement.

We welcome these important statistics and look forward to seeing them develop to make sure they meet a wide range of user needs and comply with the Code of Practice. My Health and Social Care team will continue to liaise with the SAS team over the coming months as it continues to develop the statistics.

I am copying this to Pauline Howie, Chief Executive, SAS.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont  
Assessment Programme Lead