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**Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead**

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

20 March 2023

Dear Lucy

**Adult Substance Misuse Treatment Statistics for England**

We recently completed our compliance check of the Department for Health and Social Care's (DHSC) [Adult Substance Misuse Treatment](#) statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics. The statistics are published in a provisional monthly release supplemented with an annual report the following year. The [statistics were designated](#) as National Statistics in 2015 and provide valuable insight into adults receiving treatment for substance misuse and the characteristics of different substance users. I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

We carried out this review because the responsibility for the production and publication of the statistics was transferred from Public Health England (PHE) to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) within DHSC in October 2021.

Our compliance check found many positive features that demonstrate the trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics. For example:

- These statistics are important for policy makers and service providers, at the local level and for England as a whole. The value of the statistics is enhanced by the commentary and context provided throughout the annual report – for example, a section is included in the statistics about the policy context, there is discussion of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the statistics and trends in characteristics since 2005/06 are presented. Furthermore, the statistics are published in a variety of formats to suit different users' needs such as charts, data tables and the interactive [ViewIt tool](#).
- The value of the statistics is also enhanced by the level of granularity of the different regions. The provisional monthly release provides a breakdown of trends at a local authority level, allowing users to understand their local area.
- It is great to hear that the team has a good understanding of users of its provisional monthly data. These users include treatment providers, clinicians, local authorities and the general public. It is also good to hear that the team consults with users every few years on planned changes to the underlying

dataset. Engagement is an essential part of maintaining the relevance and usefulness of the statistics for users.

We identified some areas that would further enhance the trustworthiness, quality, and value of these statistics, some of which the team was already considering:

- It is good to hear of the team's plans to update the [Quality and Methodology report](#) published on the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System this year. The report is exceptionally detailed and provides good assurance to users regarding the quality of statistics. However, the report was last updated in 2020 so it is not clear whether there have been changes to quality or methodology that users should be aware of. We consider it would also help users' understanding if you were to add a short summary of the essential aspects of the statistics' quality and methods, such as any limitations or what is and is not included in the statistics, within the annual report. This would help support appropriate use of the statistics without having to access a different website.
- While the team has a good understanding of users of its monthly statistics, we support its plans to expand user engagement activities relating to the annual report. Gaining a better understanding of what users require from the annual publication over and above the monthly statistics and what users want regarding the presentation of the statistics would be helpful as you continue to develop them.
- Finally, it is good that the team has committed to make some small changes that will enhance the demonstration of the trustworthiness of the statistics. This includes adding contact details to the annual release, adding information about roles of individuals to the pre-release access list and providing greater clarity regarding the move from PHE to OHID.

I would like to thank your team for their positive engagement with us during this review. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont  
Assessment Programme Lead