
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

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

17 October 2023

Dear Victoria

Alternative release time for National Flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports

Thank you for your correspondence (Annex to this letter) requesting to release the [National Flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports](#) at 2pm, instead of 9:30am.

Having considered your reasons, I am assured that you have a good understanding of how the statistics are used, and how this will be enhanced through keeping the 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.

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

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

Annex: correspondence from Victoria Obudulu dated 28 September 2023

Dear Ed,

In line with your [policy for alternative release times for official statistics](#), I am writing to formally request an alternative release time of 2.00pm for [National flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports](#).

I believe that a 2.00pm release time for these statistics is necessary for the following reasons:

- **To balance assured quality with timeliness.** These statistics are currently published close to real-time, four days after the coverage period they relate to. However, this means that the production team typically has only one and a half working days to compile these statistics. Publication at 2.00pm instead of the standard release time of 9.30am would allow the team additional time for quality assurance. Publication on Friday at 9:30am has been considered but was not deemed an option that best serves the public good. This is because a Friday morning release is less useful for clinical and public health decision-making. A Thursday afternoon release, on the other hand, provides more scope for clinical and public health changes to be determined and implemented prior to the weekend.
- **To ensure coherence and orderly release.** An [alternative release time of 2.00pm has previously been agreed](#) to publish seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccination statistics (listed below). Publishing the surveillance reports at the same release time as these related statistics supports coherence, orderly release and minimises confusion for users. Aligned release times for all flu and COVID-19 related statistics will also better serve public health intervention teams.
 - [Seasonal flu vaccine uptake in children of school age](#)
 - [Seasonal flu vaccine uptake in GP patients](#)
 - [Seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccine uptake in frontline healthcare workers](#)

I would be grateful if you could approve this request.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Obudulu
Head of Profession for Statistics, UK Health Security Agency