

Sir Robert Chote,
Chair – UK Statistics Authority
Fry Building
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London
SW1P 4DF

38 Degrees,
Moor Place,
1 Fore St Ave,
London,
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4th January 2023

Dear Sir Robert,

I am writing on behalf of 38 Degrees and our supporters to raise concerns about a potential misrepresentation of NHS waiting list data by the Department of Health and Social Care.

In a statement in today's *Times*, a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Social Care said "cutting waiting lists is one of the government's top five priorities, and despite the impact of strikes, we have cut the total waiting list and the number of individual patients waiting for treatment." [1]

This statement is in response to an open letter published a year to the day after the Prime Minister made getting waiting times down one of his five priorities. At the time when the Prime Minister made that promise, 6.06 million patients were waiting for 7.20 million procedures. [2] In October 2023 - the latest data available - 6.44 million patients were waiting for 7.71 million procedures. [3]

We believe this spokesperson may be referring to the fact that between September and October 2023, the number of patients fell from 6.50 million to 6.44 million and the number of procedures fell from 7.77 million to 7.71 million. [4] However, we believe it is misrepresentative to claim that the government has cut waiting lists, especially considering that these figures are still higher than they were when the Prime Minister made his promise that they would fall, on 4 January 2023.

We raise this matter in light of other concerns raised regarding the accuracy of government statements, including the claim that ministers have "cleared" the asylum backlog, which you are currently investigating. [5]

We therefore ask that you investigate the Department of Health and Social Care's statement to *The Times* and to offer your guidance on whether they are misrepresentative .

We look forward to your response on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Veronica Hawking,
Head of Campaigns, 38 Degrees

NOTES

[1] The Times, Thursday 4, January 2024, Page 6, "Celebrities urge PM to cut wait lists"

[2] NHS England: [RTT Overview Timeseries Including Estimates for Missing Trusts Oct23](#)

[3] Ibid

[4] Ibid

[5] The Standard: [Statistics watchdog to scrutinise Sunak's claim the asylum backlog has been 'cleared'](#), Wednesday 3, January 2024

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