
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation

Scott Heald
Head of Profession for Statistics
Public Health Scotland
(by email)

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Dear Scott,

NHS diagnostic activity and stage of treatment waiting times statistics

Thank you for your letter outlining the development of statistics on diagnostic activity which have been published by Public Health Scotland for the first time today. These new statistics will support users to monitor commitments relating to eight key diagnostics tests which are set out in the NHS Operational Improvement Plan. I note your plans to continue to develop the webpages to help users find all the PHS data relating to commitments in the Operational Improvement Plan and look forward to seeing these improvements over the autumn.

In your letter you also describe two key changes to your accredited official statistics publication NHS Waiting Times – Stage of Treatment. The first change you describe is that from October the statistics will use revised criteria for calculating waiting times set out in guidance issued by the Scottish Government in December 2023. I understand that this development has involved considerable work with Scottish health boards to agree how to implement the guidelines, develop data definitions, and make and test changes to IT systems within health boards. The second change you highlight is the move from quarterly to monthly publication of these statistics. As you explain, the introduction of a more frequent release is in response to high levels of public interest in this topic.

The changes outlined above will make the statistics timelier and more relevant to users. These are both core requirements of the Code of Practice for Statistics. It will be important to ensure that the change in waiting times calculations and the impact of this change on the statistics is clearly explained to users in publications over the coming months.

My team will continue to engage with you as you carry out the developments described above.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for OSR