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Date 28 May 2026  
Your ref  
Our ref SH/STS/SoT/280526  
Enquiries to Scott Heald  
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Dear Siobhan,

### **Stage of Treatment compliance review - implementation of recommendations**

Thank you again for carrying out the PHS Stage of Treatment compliance review which took place in December 2025. We were delighted that these statistics retained their accredited official statistics status following the set of improvements we implemented in October 2025 to improve their relevance and timeliness.

In February 2026 we wrote outlining our planned actions to address the compliance review's recommendations, focused on enhancing user understanding of the Stage of Treatment statistics. We have now implemented these improvements, including:

- The 3rd February 2026 monthly publication reinstated and emphasised our advice that the number of ongoing waits for inpatients, day cases, new outpatients and any other service (e.g. diagnostics) should not be added together to determine the proportion of the total population waiting for these types of care. This caution is now routinely included in monthly releases, and we will proactively engage with users who misuse the statistics in this way.
- The 28th April monthly publication was accompanied by an extended PHS Impact Assessment incorporating data up to the end of March 2026. This document examines the impact of the 2023 guidance on waiting time statistics observed across the year. It supports users to distinguish between the changes observed in key waiting times performance indicators over time that are due to the new guidance and those that reflect real change.

Key findings from this analysis have also been incorporated into the monthly report.

- The 28th April monthly publication also identifies and summarises key messages from the work published by ONS on UK health statistics' comparability. It includes PHS's endorsement of the ONS finding that direct comparisons on waiting times performance cannot be reliably drawn across the four nations, and asks users of these official statistics to refrain from drawing UK-wide comparisons. This message will continue to be included in future monthly releases. We continue to engage with UK contacts and groups to identify other information that we could provide to help users understand what data can and can't be compared across the UK.

The review also included recommendations relating to PHS pre-release access (PRA). As previously shared with you, we now have a dedicated page on the PHS website with details of PRA recipients, our work to extend this to all statistics publications is continuing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Heald', written in a cursive style.

Scott Heald

Director, Data and Digital Innovation

Head of Profession for Statistics