

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
Office for Statistics Regulation

Date 24 August 2026
Your ref
Our ref SH/EH/ACCS/24082026
Enquiries to Scott Heald
Email scott.heald@phs.scot

Dear Ed,

UPDATE ON TEMPORARY SUSPENSIONS OF ACCREDITATION: SCOTTISH HEALTH COSTS, BREAST CANCER SCREENING STATISTICS, CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING STATISTICS, AND LEARNING DISABILITY STATISTICS SCOTLAND

OSR has previously agreed to the temporary suspension of accredited official statistics status for the three PHS publications named aboveⁱ and the Learning Disability Statistics Scotland statisticsⁱⁱ that were subsequently transferred from the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) to PHS. I am now writing to request the cancellation of these accreditations for the reasons set out below. Updates on the development work underway for these statistics are also provided.

Scottish Health Services Costs (the "Costs Book")

The **Costs Book** reports annual expenditure on hospital and primary care by NHS Scotland's 14 territorial boards, the State Hospital and the National Waiting Times Centre at the Golden Jubilee University National Hospital. As anticipated, the

ⁱ <https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/37452/sh-letter-to-osr-cancer-screening-and-cost-book-accreditation-suspensions-feb-2026.pdf>; <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/temporary-suspension-of-accredited-official-statistics-status-of-cervical-cancer-screening-statistics/>;

ⁱⁱ Ruth Callander to Ed Humpherson: Request temporary NS suspension for Learning Disability Statistics Scotland – Office for Statistics Regulation

implementation of the Patient Level Information and Costing System (PLICS) by some Boards (but not all) has impacted on data quality and the ability to compare the 2024/25 costs across Boards or with previous years.

Despite these challenges I am pleased to inform you that the team have now received full submissions from 15 Boards and a partial submission from one Board. The 2024/25 data was **published** on 11 August 2026. However, due to the data limitations this was a reduced release consisting of two summary tables (NHS Scotland costs summary (R100T) and mental health) only. This is similar to the content published during the pandemic. The publication includes clear information about the different sources of data used to produce the statistics and any limitations this places on their interpretation.

While we expect the data quality to improve and we will return to publishing more comprehensive statistics in future, we anticipate that the issues affecting the data will continue beyond this upcoming publication. Consequently, it is my judgement that these statistics will not meet the standards expected of accredited official statistics. Due to the implementation of a new data source and the ongoing quality improvement work we will publish these as official statistics in development, providing users with clear explanations about their limitations. The team will continue to work with the PHS Statistical Governance team to ensure the statistics meet the requirements and standards for an official statistics release.

Breast cancer screening

We continue to work with our data supplier to investigate and mitigate the identified data quality issues. We have provided progress updates to users via **notices** on the affected publication. A further update will be provided to users at the end of August.

Our investigations have identified no issues with pre-2015 data. We have also established that the data source identified as a potential interim alternative is not suitable for our purposes (it lacks the necessary information or detail required). We are now working with Public Services Delivery (PSD) Scotland colleagues (previously NHS National Services Scotland) to scope out a longer-term solution to directly source individual-level patient data (instead of relying on the current supplier) so that PHS can apply the correct definitions at source and quality assure and create our own reports.

Please note, our investigations continue to provide reassurance that the issues relate solely to data provision; the delivery of the screening programme continues as normal.

The publication of any statistics will continue to be paused until new data can be sourced and we don't currently have a clear timeline for that. These delays and the need for new data mean the original accreditation conferred on these statistics is no longer applicable. Once new data is available we will publish these as official statistics in development until we are confident they meet the standards of official statistics.

Cervical cancer screening

Since these statistics' accreditation was suspended in May 2025, we have published statistics for 2023/24 and 2024/25 reporting three of the six key performance indicators now being used to monitor the Scottish cervical screening programme. We have also corrected the 2015/16 - 2022/23 data that had errors when originally published. However, the work to incorporate all six KPIs has been delayed by data supply issues so the forthcoming 2025/26 release, due in November, will continue to only include three KPIs. The length of time to complete their development impacts their timeliness and value so I believe their accreditation should now be cancelled. We will publish these as official statistics when all six KPIs can be reported.

Learning Disability Statistics Scotland

The Source Social Care data collection now includes learning disabilities data. I am pleased to confirm that PHS will release statistics using this data, provisionally planned for quarter 1 of 2027. The initial publication will be developmental and will have less detail than was previously reported. This is because our work with local authorities highlighted a need to pause or stop collecting data on topics with significant reporting gaps and instead focus efforts on improving the completeness and quality of the data that can be submitted. The planned publication will address an important information gap in Scotland - the number of people with learning disabilities and/or on the autism spectrum who are known to local authorities.

This new publication will likely be management information or official statistics in development, reflecting the changes implemented since the statistics were last published by SCLD as National Statistics. There will be opportunities for users to

provide feedback about further developments as part of our wider social care data modernisation programme, including the potential for data linkage to increase the value of the statistics in the future. More details about the developments that have taken place, plans for further work and the forthcoming publication date will be shared with users via the [PHS proposed changes to publications page](#) and the [PHS Forthcoming publications page](#).

When the statistics whose accreditations we are requesting to cancel have reached the required quality standard we will consider putting them forward for accreditation in the future.

I am copying this letter to Alistair McAlpine, Scottish Government Chief Statistician; Anita Morrison and Nicola Edge, Heads of Health and Social Care Analysis, Scottish Government; Tasmin Sommerfield, National Clinical Advisor/Deputy Director of Screening, PSD; Alexander Cruikshank, Team leader National Screening Programmes, Scottish Government; and Ruth Callandar, Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability.

Yours sincerely,

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

Scott Heald

Director, Data and Digital Innovation

Head of Profession for Statistics