

Complaint to the Office for Statistics Regulation

Ministerial presentation of statistics on the rollout of Fracture Liaison Services in England

Executive summary

This complaint concerns the repeated use by Health Ministers of the claim that “with the clustering of ICBs [Integrated Care Boards], 92% of the country is now covered across those clusters” by Fracture Liaison Services (FLS). It is not a complaint about Government policy or the pace of implementation. It concerns whether Parliament and the public have been given a materially misleading impression of progress against the Government’s commitment to roll out FLS across every part of England by 2030.

Before the 2024 General Election, the Department of Health and Social Care’s own answer to the question of what proportion of England had an FLS was 51% of NHS trusts.¹ That figure was accepted on all sides of the debate, and Labour’s commitment to universal coverage was made against it. Over the following two years the commitment and the coverage gap were raised with Ministers more than 60 times in Parliamentary questions and debates, and at no point did the Government challenge the figure or publish an alternative measure.² Its own figures record an increase from 80 to 83 services over the period.³ Then, in July 2026, Ministers began asserting 92% coverage.

The OSR Interventions Policy asks whether statistics have been used to communicate “a descriptive statement that the wider relevant statistical evidence would not support”, even where otherwise accurate.⁴ We submit that this is such a case, and ask the Office to consider whether the 92% figure should continue to be used as a measure of rollout progress.

1. Fracture Liaison Services and the campaign for universal coverage

Fracture Liaison Services are early-diagnosis clinics for osteoporosis. They identify patients over 50 who suffer a fragility fracture, assess them for the condition and start treatment, reducing the risk of a further fracture by up to 40%.⁵ Because roughly half the country had no such service, a patient’s chance of being diagnosed after a first broken bone depended on where they lived. Ending this “postcode lottery” was the object of a sustained campaign by the Royal Osteoporosis Society, the Mail on Sunday and the Sunday Express in the run-up to the 2024 General Election.

¹Written Question [HL2562](#), tabled by Baroness Merron 19 February 2024; answered by Lord Markham, 28 February 2024, with the APPG inquiry report attached.

²[Annex 1](#): schedule of occasions on which the commitment and the coverage gap were raised with Ministers, July 2024 – July 2026

³Written Answer, Baroness Merron, 20 July 2026 [HL1933](#): FLS numbers “Analysis of 2025 Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) data shows that the number of FLS’ in England has increased since 2024, from 80 to 83. These 83 services are based in 23 out of the 25 integrated care board (ICB) clusters. Analysis of the 2025 data suggests that no ICB clusters had an FLS in each of the NHS hospitals within the ICB clusters. The number of FLS’ per ICB cluster ranged from one to eight.”

⁴UK Statistics Authority, Our Interventions Policy.

⁵E.g. Written Answer [HL3734](#), 14 January 2025 (Baroness Merron): Fracture Liaison Services “are a globally recognised care model for secondary fracture prevention and can reduce the risk of refracture by up to 40%”.

2. A baseline accepted on all sides: 51%

The coverage figure at the centre of that debate had a clear provenance. A freedom of information exercise by the Royal Osteoporosis Society, published in August 2021, found that 63 of 123 NHS trusts in England - 51% - had an FLS.⁶ In February 2024, Baroness Merron asked the then Government “what proportion of England has a full fracture liaison service”. The Health Minister, Lord Markham, answered: “51% of National Health Service trusts in England provided a fracture liaison service”, attaching the report in which the figure was set out.⁷

By the time of the election, the same figure had been cited in the House of Lords, across the national press, by the House of Lords Library and - after the election - from both opposition front benches, in a debate responded to by Baroness Merron, as Minister, without correction.⁸ In short, 51% was official statistics working as the Code of Practice intends: a published source, a stated method, and a number that every side of the debate could rely on.

3. The commitment

It was against that baseline that the commitment was made. In June 2024, Wes Streeting pledged that a Labour Government would deliver “FLSs right across the country”, achieving 100% coverage by 2030, with the rollout plan among his first acts in office: “All the evidence shows earlier diagnosis means faster treatment and better outcomes for patients.” In September 2024, as Secretary of State, he told the Royal Osteoporosis Society: “We’ve made the promise, and now we will keep the promise.”⁹

4. Two years in which the figure stood unchallenged

Between July 2024 and July 2026, the commitment and the coverage gap were raised with Ministers more than 60 times in Parliamentary questions and debates.¹⁰ The Government’s standard answer - “We are committed to rolling out Fracture Liaison Services across every part of the country by 2030” - also appears in the Renewed Women’s Health Strategy (Action 41) and the 10-Year Health Plan (“national rollout by 2030”).¹¹

At no point in those two years did the Government dispute the 51% baseline, publish an alternative measure of coverage, or suggest that progress should be assessed on any other basis. A reader following the debate - in Parliament or in the press - had every reason to understand “coverage” as it had always been measured: the share of NHS trusts with a service.

5. July 2026: “92% of the country”

In July 2026, Ministers adopted a new figure.

⁶Royal Osteoporosis Society, freedom of information exercise published 18 August 2021: 63 of 123 NHS trusts in England (51%) confirmed they had an FLS. Adopted in the APPG on Osteoporosis and Bone Health inquiry report, *How to end the postcode lottery* (2021).

⁷See footnote 1.

⁸HL Deb 20 January 2022 (Lord Black of Brentwood: “in England only 51% of NHS trusts provide a fracture liaison service”); Mail on Sunday, 11 February and 7 April 2024 (“available in only just over half” of trusts); Sunday Express, 28 April 2024 (57% of the eligible English population); House of Lords Library, *Fracture liaison services: towards 100% coverage in England*, 25 November 2024; HL Deb 4 December 2024 (Lord Kamall: “only 51% of trusts... covering only 57% of the population”; Lord Rennard: “In 2021 we were given the figure of 51%-or 63 out of 123”), answered by Baroness Merron without correction of the figures.

⁹Mail on Sunday, 2 June 2024 (interview with Wes Streeting); Royal Osteoporosis Society, “Wes Streeting: ‘We made the promise, we’ll keep the promise’”, 24 September 2024 (Labour Party Conference fringe event).

¹⁰See footnote 2.

¹¹Renewed Women’s Health Strategy for England, Action 41; 10-Year Health Plan for England (“national rollout by 2030”).

Baroness Merron, House of Lords, Oral Question, 6 July 2026

"Delivery will be through ICBs. Of the new clusters, we know that only two do not have fracture liaison services."¹²

Karin Smyth MP, Public Bill Committee, Health Bill, 16 July 2026

"We are absolutely committed to having coverage across the country by 2030... with the clustering of ICBs, 92% of the country is now covered across those clusters."

"If one counts the new clustered ICBs in that target, 92% of areas are covered."¹³

The last coverage figure on the parliamentary record was the Department's own answer: 51%. Told now that 92% of the country is covered, a listener would reasonably conclude that coverage had nearly doubled and the commitment was close to being met. Neither statement explained that the basis of measurement had changed.

What had actually happened, on the Government's own figures, is that 80 services became 83 - three additional services in two years, with no ICB cluster having an FLS in each of its hospitals.¹⁴

The Royal Osteoporosis Society has analysed the latest data from the national audit of Fracture Liaison Services, which records 77 FLSs in England seeing more than one patient a year. Applying the same methodology as its 2021 freedom of information exercise, the previous accepted benchmark for FLS availability, we estimate that these services are hosted by 66 of the 120 acute NHS trusts that would be expected to provide FLS, leaving 54 trusts with no provision. On the measure the Department gave in February 2024, coverage today stands at around half of NHS trusts - 55%, against the 51% baseline.¹⁵

None of this should resemble a near-doubling of coverage has taken place as the government's 92% figure implies.

6. What the 92% actually measures - and why it continues to mislead

The 92% derives from an administrative change. In 2025, the 42 ICBs were clustered into a much smaller number of organisations, and 23 of the 25 clusters counted by the Department contain at least one FLS somewhere within their boundaries. The services are the same services, and the populations they were commissioned to serve have not changed; the boundaries around them grew. The map has changed; the services have not.

Nor can a cluster containing "a" service be described as covered in any sense a listener would recognise. A cluster can span up to four million people; a typical FLS serves 200,000 to 600,000, and the Government itself confirms that no cluster has an FLS in each of its

¹²[HL Deb 6 July 2026](#), Oral Question, Fracture Liaison Services (Baroness Merron)

¹³[Health Bill Public Bill Committee](#), seventeenth sitting, 16 July 2026 (Karin Smyth MP)

¹⁴See footnote 3.

¹⁵ Royal Osteoporosis Society analysis of the Fracture Liaison Service Database (FLS-DB), 2025 data. Of the 77 FLSs recorded, an estimated 11 are additional services within a trust that already hosts one; the 77 services therefore represent 66 NHS trusts with at least one FLS. The number of acute NHS trusts that would be expected to host an FLS is 120, a slight decrease from the 123 used in the 2021 exercise following trust mergers. $120 - 66 = 54$ trusts with no FLS provision; $66/120 = 55\%$, against $63/123$ (51%) in 2021.

hospitals.¹⁶ The Hereford FLS, for example, identified 955 patients last year in the small city it serves; after Herefordshire and Worcestershire clustered with Coventry and Warwickshire, that is under 8% of the expected fragility fractures across the newly “covered” area. It is akin to promising a national rollout of GP surgeries, then declaring the job nearly done because each region contains a surgery somewhere. And since some 96% of the services in the calculation predate this Government, the figure presents an inherited landscape as delivery.

Finally, the figure was asserted without a published source or methodology. A listener - or a parliamentarian - had no way to check what was being counted, or how. The basis only emerged afterwards, through a Written Question. Equality of access to the data behind a public statement is the first principle of intelligent transparency; here it was absent at the moment the claim was made.¹⁷

7. The OSR's tests and the remedy sought

The interventions policy is concerned where, on a question of significant public interest, statistics are used to communicate “a descriptive statement that the wider relevant statistical evidence would not support”, despite being otherwise accurate.¹⁸ That describes this case precisely. The arithmetic - 23 of 25 - is capable of accurate description. The proposition it has been used to communicate, that the rollout is 92% complete, is not supported by the evidence: not by the Department's own service counts, not by the national audit, and not by the measure the Department itself gave when last asked directly.

The concern is aggravated by who used the figure, and where. Within a fortnight, the figure and its basis were given in the Lords, in a Public Bill Committee and in a Written Answer: three settings, two Ministers, one measure, presented as the Government's account of delivery on a flagship health commitment affecting a predominantly female, predominantly older population. Statistics presented with that authority are precisely those on which Parliament and the public are entitled to rely, and a figure that cannot bear the weight placed on it corrodes the trust the Code of Practice exists to protect.

We therefore ask the Office to consider whether the repeated presentation of the 92% figure complies with the Code of Practice for Statistics and the principles of intelligent transparency; and, if it does not, to recommend that the Department cease using it as a measure of rollout progress, reporting instead on measures that reflect what was promised - services established, geographical patient access, or patients identified through the national audit.

¹⁶See footnote 3.

¹⁷Office for Statistics Regulation, Regulatory guidance on the transparent release and use of statistics and data (“intelligent transparency”).

¹⁸See footnote 4.

Annex 1: schedule of occasions on which the commitment and the coverage gap were raised with Ministers, July 2024

Date	Format	Asker	Answerer	Source
29 January 2025	Written question	Mike Martin	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
30 January 2025	Written question	Dr Rosena Allin-Khan	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
04 February 2025	Written question	Lord Lexden	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
04 February 2025	Written question	Wera Hobhouse	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
04 February 2025	Written question	Wera Hobhouse	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
04 February 2025	Written question	Matt Bishop	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
04 February 2025	Written question	Alison Bennett	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
04 February 2025	Written question	Matt Bishop	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
07 February 2025	Written question	Pippa Heylings	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
11 February 2025	Oral question	Ed Argar	Wes Streeting	hansard.parliament.uk...
12 February 2025	Written question	Liz Jarvis	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
12 February 2025	Written question	Kevin McKenna	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
12 February 2025	Written question	Baroness Altmann	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
13 February 2025	Written question	Adam Dance	Andrew Gwynne	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
13 February 2025	Written question	Adam Dance	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +
14 February 2025	Written question	Joe Robertson	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. +

14 February 2025	Written question	Joe Robertson	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
20 February 2025	Written question	Mark Pritchard	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
20 February 2025	Written question	Mark Pritchard	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
28 February 2025	Written question	Lord Kamall	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
08 April 2025	Written question	Tom Morrison	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
09 April 2025	Written question	Victoria Collins	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
09 April 2025	Written question	Victoria Collins	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
26 June 2025	Oral question	Baroness Altmann	Baroness Merron	hansard.parliament.uk...
03 July 2025	Oral question	Ed Argar	Wes Streeting	hansard.parliament.uk...
14 July 2025	Written question	Greg Stafford	Karin Smyth	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
15 July 2025	Written question	Rupa Huq	Karin Smyth	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
15 July 2025	Written question	Neil Hudson	Karin Smyth	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
21 July 2025	Written question	Anna Sabine	Karin Smyth	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
21 July 2025	Written question	Lord Kamall	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
05 August 2025	Written question	Lord Shinkwin	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
12 August 2025	Written question	Richard Holden	Karin Smyth	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
05 September 2025	Written question	Luke Evans	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
05 September 2025	Written question	Lisa Smart	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±

11 September 2025	Written question	Jim Shannon	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
13 October 2025	Written question	Matt Vickers	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
13 October 2025	Written question	Matt Vickers	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
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13 October 2025	Written question	Matt Vickers	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
13 October 2025	Written question	Matt Vickers	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
16 October 2025	Oral question	Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen	Baroness Blake	hansard.parliament.uk...
24 October 2025	Written question	Lizzi Collinge	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
05 November 2025	Written question	Jim Shannon	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
14 November 2025	Written question	Lord Black of Brentwood	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
26 November 2025	Written question	Simon Opher	Ashley Dalton	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
20 January 2026	Written question	Anna Sabine	Karin Smyth	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
13 May 2026	Written question	Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
19 May 2026	Written question	Alberto Costa	Sharon Hodgson	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
29 April 2026	Written question	Lord Black of Brentwood	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
29 April 2026	Written question	Lord Black of Brentwood	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
24 April 2026	Written question	Connor Naismith	Sharon Hodgson	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±
29 April 2026	Written question	Jeremy Hunt	Sharon Hodgson	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ±

29 April 2026	Written question	Gareth Davies	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷
13 May 2026	Written question	Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷
04 June 2026	Written question	Lord Shinkwin	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷
03 June 2026	Written question	Greg Stafford	Sharon Hodgson	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷
05 June 2026	Written question	Alberto Costa	Sharon Hodgson	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷
05 June 2026	Written question	Alberto Costa	Sharon Hodgson	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷
10 June 2026	Written question	Lord Rooker	Baroness Merron	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷
01 July 2026	Written question	Zöe Franklin	Sharon Hodgson	questions-statements.parliament.uk.. ÷