
Director General for Regulation

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18 May 2015

Dear Mark

Assessment of Statistics on NHS Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity and NHS Hospital Activity

I am writing in relation to two assessments of NHS England statistics.

Firstly, thank you for the correspondence outlining the actions that have been taken to address the requirements in Assessment Report 262 – NHS Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity.

On behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, the Regulation Committee has reviewed these on the advice of the Assessment team and I am pleased to confirm the designation of *NHS Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity* as National Statistics. The Regulation Committee welcomes NHS England's recent efforts to publish information about the assurance arrangements for these statistics, applying the principles of the Authority's Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit.

It is a requirement of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* that compliance with the *Code of Practice* must be maintained. We would invite you to incorporate the attached text in publications containing the statistics. This text may only be used where National Statistics designation has been awarded following an Assessment Report. It is intended to convey a strong and independent endorsement for the statistical publication.

Secondly, I welcome your letter of 11 May 2015 confirming our discussions in relation to the sets of statistics assessed as part of Assessment Report 228 – NHS Hospital Activity. The key points were:

- *Imaging and Radiology* should no longer be considered as being in scope for retaining National Statistics status, given that NHS England has decided to discontinue publication, pending the outcome of a user consultation
- Similarly, in respect of *Quarterly Activity Return*, this user need is likely to be met by other official statistics outputs in the future and so any further investment in meeting the Requirements from Assessment Report 228 would not represent a good use of NHS England's resources
- For *Quarterly Monitoring of Cancelled Operations* you acknowledged that NHS England's response to the initial set of Requirements has been drawn out and that these Requirements need to be revisited

Under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the Board of the UK Statistics Authority is responsible for deciding on the designation of statistics as National Statistics, on the advice of the Director General for Regulation. In light of these developments, and based on my advice, the Authority has decided to discontinue the designation of *Imaging and Radiology*, *Quarterly Activity Return* and *Quarterly Monitoring of Cancelled Operations* as National Statistics. The Authority would be grateful if you would make clear to users that National Statistics designation has been discontinued.

With respect to *Quarterly Monitoring of Cancelled Operations* I will ask my team to schedule a Continuing Compliance Check with a view to confirming what action will be needed by NHS England to regain National Statistics status. Regarding any future replacements for *Quarterly Activity Return* I will wait to hear from you as and when these are ready to be assessed against the *Code of Practice*.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with us at any time.

Yours sincerely

Ed Humpherson

Text that may only be used in publications that carry the National Statistics logo following assessment and designation:

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.