
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM
First Minister
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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5 February 2018

Dear Mr Jones,

Thank you for your letter of 25 January, where you raised concerns about the Prime Minister's comparison of accident and emergency performance in England and Wales.¹

You are right to say that the comparison is not valid. The figure used for England refers to the accident and emergency wait time from the decision to admit to admission into another part of the health service. The figure used for Wales represents the entire time patients wait from arriving to leaving accident and emergency services, including the time from decision to admit to actual admission.

Waiting time comparisons between UK countries are difficult, for a variety of reasons, including differences in data collection and in health service structure, the use of walk-in centres for example.

It is clearly important to be able to compare health and social care service performance across the UK, particularly to learn lessons from different ways of doing things. I welcome current efforts to improve accessibility of the data and their comparability² but strongly urge the need for faster progress. I am copying this letter to the National Statistician and to the Chief Statisticians of Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales.

The Authority and the Office for Statistics Regulation will continue to take a close interest in their work.

Yours sincerely



Sir David Norgrove

¹ [Letter from Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM to Sir David Norgrove](#) (January 2018).

² For example: 1) www.isdscotland.org/health-topics/Public-Health/publications/2017-02-21/visualisation.asp
2) <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/health-waiting-time-statistics/>