
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health
(by email)

7 October 2021

Dear Minister,

Today, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has published its review; *Improving health and social care statistics: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic*.¹

The pandemic resulted in a huge public appetite for data and statistics. It has also drawn attention to existing challenges for health and social care statistics. I am sure you would agree that the health system needs both to learn lessons and to build on its achievements in this area.

The efforts of those involved in the production of COVID-19 statistics have been remarkable, in many cases overcoming challenges which would previously have seemed insurmountable. However, there have been times when data about COVID-19 in Northern Ireland have not met expectations around accessibility or transparency - for example, on vaccination statistics.²

The pandemic also highlighted the importance of transparency, so essential for building public confidence in statistics and in government decisions based on them. When statistics and data are quoted publicly by ministers or senior officials, they should be supported by a publication which provides the data in an accessible form with appropriate explanations of context, limitations, and sources.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss these topics further.

Yours sincerely,



Sir David Norgrove

¹ [Improving health and social care statistics: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic](#), Office for Statistics Regulation, 7 October 2021

² [Letter from Ed Humpherson to Richard Pengelly, Department of Health, Northern Ireland](#): Number of COVID-19 vaccinations administered in the UK, Office for Statistics Regulation, 20 January 2021