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The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Authority Enquiries
UK Statistics Authority
Fry Building
1st Floor, 2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: GM/TF/2307031

07 March, 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write regarding claims made by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in a BBC interview, as referenced in the story linked below:

[PM lies directly about A&E Waiting times in England and Scotland – Talking-up Scotland \(talkingupscotlandtwo.com\)](#)

I am concerned that Mr Sunak selected statistics that are not a like-for-like comparison and in using them he misled the viewers and therefore the country on a serious public health matter.

As a consequence, I am requesting that the UK Statistics Authority investigate whether the claims made by Mr Sunak comparing A&E stats in England and Scotland were accurate?

I draw your attention to the following:

NHS England's agency NHS Digital produce an annual comparison of the four nations' A&E performance.

[Hospital Accident & Emergency Activity 2021-22 - NDRS \(digital.nhs.uk\)](#)

The file on 'home nations' comparison notes it

*"...provides a comparison of the number of unplanned A&E attendances and percentage of attendances spending i) 4 hour or less and ii) over 12 hours in type 1/Major A&E departments from arrival to discharge, admission or transfer for each of the four Home Nations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). **Given the different models of service provision across the four nations the comparison is restricted to Type 1 or Major A&E departments within each nation.** //....."*

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*Whilst this **allows a nearer like for like comparison** it does not take account of the differing casemix of patients that present at type 1 services which will be influenced by the provision and accessibility of alternative types of A&E.”*

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine observed that in NHS England “December’s performance figures are truly shocking, **more than 50% of all patients facing waits over four-hours** and nearly 55,000 patients facing 12-hour waits from the decision to admit. 12-hour waits from decision to admit obfuscate the truth and are only the tip of the iceberg, we know the reality is far worse.”
RCEM: How far does Emergency Department performance need to fall for political leaders to take meaningful action? | RCEM

The NHS England A&E attendances and emergency admissions data was published for December 2022. For ‘all’ sites the performance was 65% in December (68.9% in November). But the Type 1 performance was 49.6% in December (54.5% in November). From this its clear that the leading body, RCEM, are clear that the A&E measure that should be focused on is Type1 (Major/Core).
Statistics » A&E Attendances and Emergency Admissions (england.nhs.uk)

As NHS Digital clear that for compatibility Type1/Core/Major sites should be used, and as RCEM are clear that Type1/Core/Major is the measure which shows A&E performance most clearly it is far from apparent why the PM would claim England’s A&Es were performing better than Scotland’s. As for over 7 years Scotland Core A&Es have performed better than England’s Type1 A&Es.

I hope this helps inform your consideration and I await your reply.

Yours faithfully,

Gillian Martin MSP