



House of Commons  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
0117 953 3575  
karin.smyth.mp@parliament.uk



Karin Smyth  
Labour MP for Bristol South

Office for Statistics Regulation

1 February 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to the Office for Statistics Regulation in my capacity as Shadow Health Minister, to raise an issue concerning the use of data by the Department of Health and Social Care.

In a press release and social media statement published to on Thursday 25 January, both the Department of Health and Secretary of State Victoria Atkins MP claimed that the target of delivering 5,000 extra permanent hospitals beds this winter had been achieved.

The target referenced was first laid out in the NHS Urgent & Emergency Care Recovery Plan in January 2023, and reiterated in July 2023 in an NHS England press release titled: *NHS sets out plans for winter with new measures to help speed up discharge for patients and improve care*. The stated target was:

- To deliver 5,000 additional 'core' permanent general and acute beds, producing a total of more than 99,000 core beds in place by December 2023.

The Urgent and Emergency Recovery Plan stated that the 5,000 extra beds ambition was set against a baseline of 94,500, the original level of core beds planned by NHS trusts in 2022/23.

In claiming this target has been met, the Department's analysis today appears to misconstrue the data for December 2023.

In a dataset published by NHS Digital, titled: *Critical care and General & Acute Beds – Urgent and Emergency Care Daily Situation Reports 2023-24*, data for December 2023 clearly states there were 98,123 core beds in operation across NHS trusts. This figure is 877 beds short of the 99,000 target – the benchmark set for the 5,000 extra beds.

While the data indicates there were a total of 100,894 general and acute beds in place across the NHS in December 2023, this figure critically includes 2,877 escalation beds - when the stated target was clearly in reference to core permanent beds only.

I am requesting that you investigate this matter to provide clarity to the public.

Yours sincerely,

Karin Smyth  
Labour MP for Bristol South

I will treat as confidential all personal information you give to me or my staff. I may need to pass on this information to others so they can help you. I undertake to handle the information you give me in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. I may contact you again using this information. If you do not wish to receive further correspondence please write to me at the House of Commons, Westminster, SW1A 0AA.

This letter should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice or as a substitute for it.