

Karin Smyth MP  
House of Commons  
(via email)

13 June 2024

Dear Ms Smyth,

Thank you for your letter of 10 May regarding a statement made by the Secretary of State for Health, the Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP, who said “we’ve cut waiting lists for five months in a row”. This was made in a video posted by the Department of Health and Social Care on X on 20 April. You raised a concern that this statement appeared to overlook a change to the data collection.

The guidance on the recording and reporting of Referral to Treatment (RTT) data was updated on 2 February 2024 to say that community service pathways should, from February 2024, no longer be reported in RTT datasets and should instead be captured in community health services data collections. These changes were announced appropriately by NHS England, with the estimated impact published in an [ad-hoc management information excel file](#). The [Referral to Treatment \(RTT\) statistics for 2023/24](#) clearly indicate a break in the data series, with a dotted line appropriately separating out February and March 2024, where the changes to submitted data started.

In the statistics release, NHS England estimated that the discontinuity between January and February 2024 was ‘around 36,000’. As the reported waiting list decreased by 36,198 between end-January and end-February, this results in a small decrease of around 198 once the discontinuity is taken into account. This followed falls in each of the four months from end-September to end-January. The Secretary of State’s statement was supported by the data, but greater transparency around the discontinuity in the time period being referred to would have better supported understanding.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir Robert Chote**  
Chair