

Michael Marra MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for North East Scotland
Scottish Parliament
(via email)

25 March 2026

Dear Mr Marra,

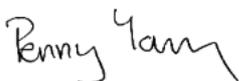
I am contacting you on behalf of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. We promote and safeguard the use of statistics in public debate, and investigate concerns raised with the Authority. Concerns have been raised with us regarding your claim made on BBC Scotland Debate Night on 18 February that “We have more people in Edinburgh waiting over two years for surgery than we do in the whole of England”. In the absence of a confirmed source for the figures referred to in the claim, we assume that these are likely to be hospital waiting times statistics published by Public Health Scotland and NHS England.

We know that many users want to be able to compare NHS performance across the UK and that it is frustrating for them when they are unable to do so. In this case, however, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and producers of health statistics across the UK have [explained](#) that for planned care, it is particularly challenging to produce comparable data due to differing healthcare policies, commissioning processes and patient data systems. Producers are clear that their data cannot be used to make direct comparisons of waiting lists between nations in this way. ONS does advise that it can be helpful to compare trends in waiting times statistics between England and Wales, and separately between Scotland and Northern Ireland, because the systems and compilation of statistics in these nations, while still different, are most comparable.

We have covered this issue in our recent [election article about health statistics in Scotland](#) as well as a [public intervention](#) where concerns were raised with us about similar claims.

We would be happy to discuss this issue further with your office.

Yours sincerely,



Penny Young
Interim Chair