![UK Statistics Authority]

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Humza Yousaf MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
Scottish Government
(via email)

1 November 2022

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am pleased to write to you commending the Office for Statistics Regulation's report published today. *2022 update: lessons learned for health and social care statistics from the COVID-19 pandemic*[1] is an insightful analysis of the last year of the pandemic.

In its 2021 report[2], the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) highlighted the vital role that data and statistics played during the pandemic in supporting individuals to reach informed decisions. It has been possible to meet the increased analytical demands of the pandemic thanks to the extraordinary, dedicated efforts of the statisticians and analysts in your department. For that, I thank them all.

In its 2022 update, much like the UK's health and care services, OSR has found a statistical system which is transitioning from pandemic crisis mode to living with COVID-19. While the intense analytical demands of the pandemic have eased, a real challenge is maintaining some level of analysis relating to COVID-19 while publishing new statistics to measure emerging issues, such as new disease outbreaks, and re-invigorating 'business as usual' statistics, such as those on NHS performance and the health and social care workforces. In the context of the increased demands on producers, we have identified four key areas which support the production of statistics which serve the public good:

- Horizon scanning – understanding what information people need
- Availability – ensuring data and statistics are made available in an accessible and transparent way
- Collaboration – sharing data, plugging gaps and improving coherence and comparability
- Communication – continuing to innovate and communicate statistics in a clear and engaging way to a wide range of users

We have seen many improvements to health and social care statistics over the last year. We have found a better understanding of the need for transparency of numbers used publicly by governments and are encouraged by new statistics published on topics of high public

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[1] [Office for Statistics Regulation](#), November 2022
[2] [Office for Statistics Regulation](#), October 2021

interest and ongoing efforts to fill existing data gaps. However, there is still progress to be made against several recommendations in our 2021 report, such as improving, where possible, the comparability of statistics across the UK and overcoming barriers to data sharing.

There are several developments relating to health and social care data in Scotland which we consider will support producers in their ability to provide timely information and analysis to support future decision-making. The Scottish Government is currently developing its Data Strategy for health and social care[3]. Given that the pandemic demonstrated the importance of providing aggregated statistics to inform a wide range of people, we hope to see this purpose of health and social care data included in the final strategy. I look forward to the successful implementation of this data strategy, and trust that sufficient resource will be made available to turn new operational data into published statistics.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Robert Chote
Chair

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[3] Data Strategy for health and social care, Scottish Government, 2022