

Welsh Government

Summary of Responses

Content and Timing of Official Statistics for Health

Date of issue: 18 April 2013

Response To The Consultation On Content And Timing Of Official Statistics For Health

What did we do?

During October to December 2012 the Knowledge and Analytical Services department of the Welsh Government consulted on the content and timing of official statistics¹. We wanted to know if the pilot of the earlier publication of the management information supporting the official statistics on 'Time Spent in NHS Wales A&E Departments' caused the users of our statistics any problems.

What were the key themes in the responses?

We had 7 written responses (see Annex 1) and we also held two user events during the consultation period. Over 100 people attended these events, with the large majority being attendees from outside Welsh Government.

Feedback from these events was also considered when forming the response to the consultation.

Two key themes emerged from the consultation responses.

- Timeliness for monthly publication of data that can be extracted and manipulated is important and helpful;
- Users valued statistics produced in accordance with the Official Statistics Code of Practice².

Other feedback was also received in the written responses and this is dealt with later in this report.

The positive response associated with the quality and independence of official statistics is welcomed. It is also timely that the Public Administration Select Committee published a report³ raising concerns about the way government statistics are produced and disseminated and the risk to public confidence in the statistical system. Given that, this response proposes that management information that is released in the essence of openness and transparency will be done so in accordance with the principles contained within the Official Statistics Code of Practice, i.e. it is pre-announced and planned. We have taken this approach as we are content the specific statistics are of sufficient quality at this stage.

¹<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/healthstatistics/?status=closed&lang=en>

²<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>

³<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmpubadm/406/40602.htm>

What are we going to do in the future?

Based on the two emerging themes the recommendations are below.

Short Term

1. The management information underlying the 'Time Spent in NHS Wales A&E Departments' will continue to be published quickly after the reference period as the quality is fit for purpose. This data will be supported by quality information, such as the existing Quality Report⁴. The data will be released in accordance with the principles underpinning the Official Statistics Code of Practice. This process will be developed with our partner organisation – the NHS Wales Informatics Service – as the holders of the data.
2. Official statistics on 'Time Spent in NHS Wales A&E Departments' will be published on a quarterly basis to include the monthly information that is already in the public domain from (1) above. This output will contain more contextual information and commentary. The first quarterly publication will be in the next few months and will be pre-announced in the usual manner⁵. As previously, data will be published on StatsWales. This will be a monthly data series. Revisions to data occurring within the quarter will be dealt with as detailed in the Quality Report⁶.

Medium to Longer Term

3. Improve the quality of certain data items within the A&E dataset. This would help identify points of interest such as the reasons for presenting at A&E, more detailed analysis of time and how many were admitted. This dataset could have wider interest and use than monitoring A&E performance targets, such as providing data to support the Flying Start Outcome Measures Framework and specifically to look at Flying Start children presenting at A&E departments as having unintentional injuries in the home.
4. Establish a mechanism to publish timely management information as official statistics in an open and transparent manner, in accordance with the principles in the Official Statistics Code of Practice.
5. Identify those data flows that might fit into the process piloted to broaden the scope of this work.
6. Maintain ongoing user engagement to ensure the outputs are fit for purpose. This is likely to be in the form of half day workshops for users who are interested in the specific output. These workshops will be advertised in a number of places to ensure breadth of attendance.
7. Understand the comparability with other UK countries.

⁴ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/accidentquality/?lang=en>

⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/duo/duo-month/?lang=en>

⁶ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/accidentquality/?lang=en>

Other specific points raised in the written feedback

As part of this feedback users also took the opportunity to ask for specific issues directly related to their needs. These included

- More information on outcomes of patients who present at A&E such as the proportion of admissions.
- Move to publication of weekly statistics on A&E performance.
- Broaden this approach to NHS waiting times for cancer.
- Identifying the linguistic skills of the NHS workforce.

We take all user feedback seriously and will consider the above as part of the annual work programme.

Annex 1

Written responses were received from

- Andrew Doughton
- Claire Miller, Western Mail
- Department of Health, Social Services and Children - Performance and Delivery Division, Welsh Government
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- Royal College of Nursing Wales
- Welsh Language Commissioner
- Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, Mark Drakeford AM