



# Department of Health & Social Care

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Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP  
Chair, Procedure Committee  
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22 February 2021

Dear Karen,

Further to the Committee session last December, I am writing to provide an update to you and the Committee on the Department of Health and Social Care's response to Written Parliamentary Questions, reflecting the completed January data.

First, I want to reiterate my thanks to the Committee for its patience during these especially challenging times. To restate the evidence I gave to the Committee, recovering PQ performance is a departmental priority and we are committed to returning to the high standards expected of us as quickly as possible.

As promised to you and the Committee, I am pleased to provide an update on the progress of our efforts to recover PQ performance, including our work to clear the backlog of overdue PQs and increase the number of PQs that are answered on time.

## **PQs received**

We are continuing to receive a very high volume of PQs. In January we received 1275 PQs - over eleven times the volumes received in the same month last year.

## **Response rate**

As of the end of November, and at the time of appearing before you, our on-time response rate was 10.7%. Our January on-time response rate was 29.4%, reflecting a significant step forward in performance. This is our fourth successive month of performance improvement and our strongest performance since March 2020, although I fully recognise that we need to sustain this progress and further build upon it.

## **Overdue PQs**

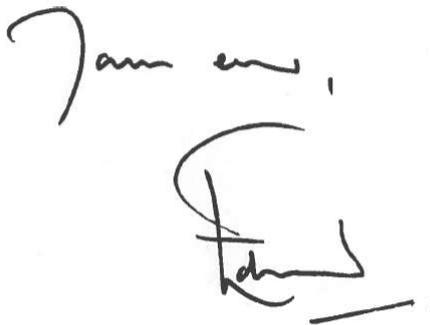
We are continuing to make progress on the backlog of overdue PQs although this is challenging while incoming volumes remain high. As of the end of January our backlog stood at 913. This has come down from 1,015 at the end of November.

We have also made good progress in answering our most delayed PQs. Of the overdue PQs in the Department, less than 1% of PQs are 3 months or more overdue, a marked improvement from 43.6% in September, and the vast majority are only a few days overdue. While again there is more to do, I believe this represents significant progress.

## **PQ progress through the Department**

We are also focused on reducing the average length of time that PQs are taking to get through the Department. Just before the Recovery Plan was introduced (removing the period of recess,) PQs were in the Department for 23 days on average. This has decreased at a considerable rate each month. In January this decreased to 7 days and we are continuing to reduce this further such that significantly more PQs can be answered on time.

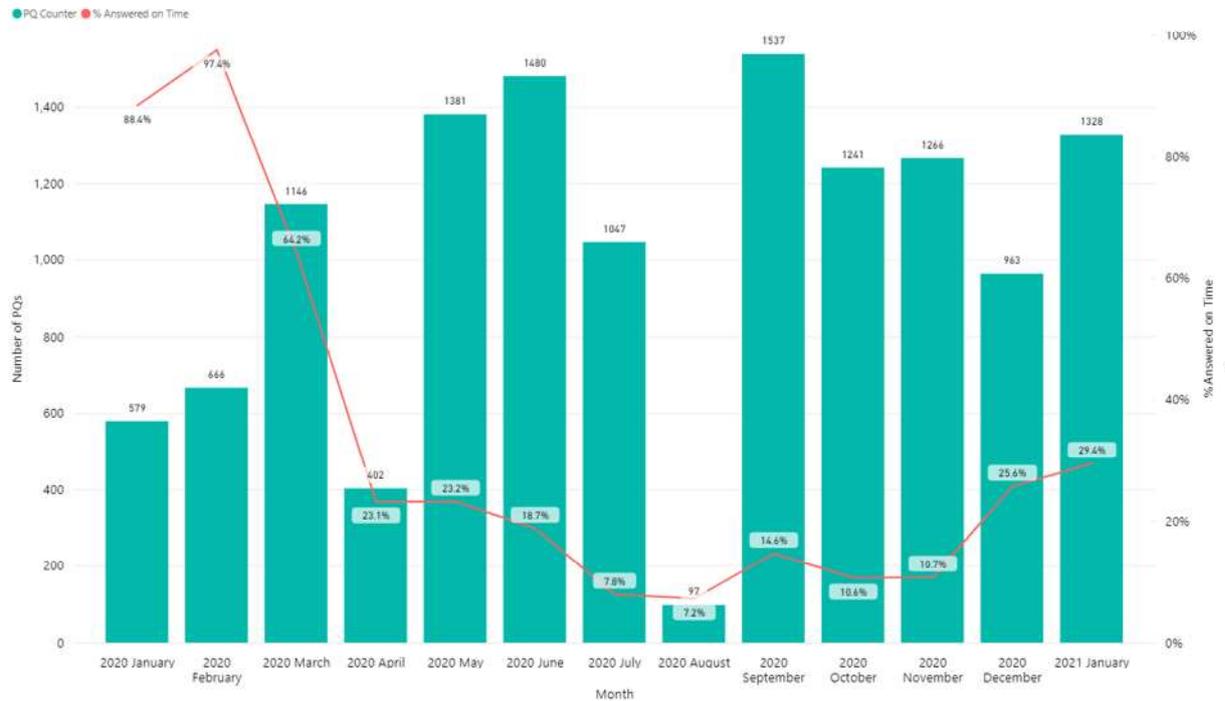
Please do get your Clerk to let me know if there is any further specific information you would like on performance beyond the above, and I will endeavour to provide it. More broadly, with your permission, I will write to you and the Committee again next month when we have the verified February data to provide this to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', with a large, stylized flourish below it that resembles the letter 'E'.

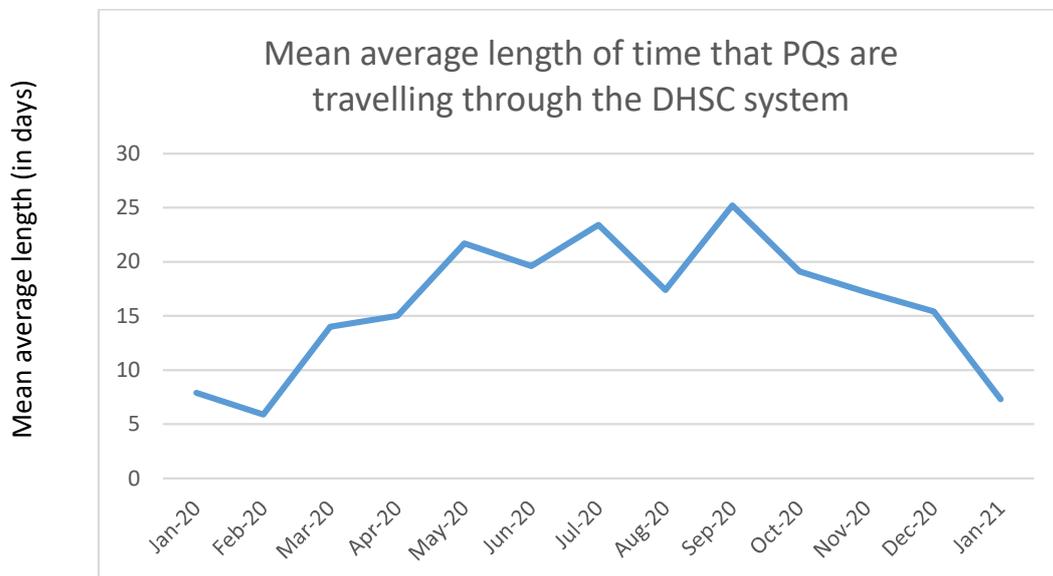
**EDWARD ARGAR MP**

## Annex A

### Monthly Volume of PQs Due and Percentage Answered on Time in the Last Year



## Annex B



*Please note these only include answered PQs. The month indicates the month in which they came into the department.*