



Department of Health & Social Care

Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP
Chair, Procedure Committee
House of Commons
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*Edward Argar MP
Minister of State for Health*

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13 April 2020

Dear Karen,

As mentioned last month, I am writing again to provide an update to you and the Committee on the Department of Health and Social Care's response to Written Parliamentary Questions, based on the completed March data.

Recovering PQ performance remains a departmental priority and we are committed to returning to the high standards expected of us as quickly as possible.

This letter provides 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

PQ volumes remain high, but slightly lower than in previous months. In March we received 993 PQs. This is a slight decrease from the same month last year, in which we received 1011 PQs.

Response rate

At the end of March, I am pleased to report that our on-time response rate rose to 50.7% which represents a performance improvement of almost 20 percentage points in the last month. It is our sixth successive month of performance improvement and our strongest performance since March 2020.

Overdue PQs

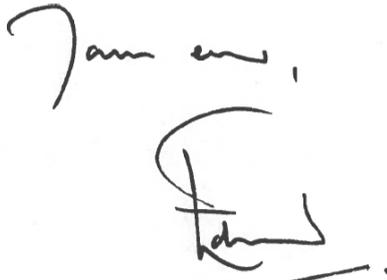
We are continuing to make progress on the backlog. At the end of March our backlog stood at 382, a significant improvement on the 908 PQs that remained at the end of February.

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. To gauge the performance in the last calendar month, we have taken a snapshot of the time taken to answer PQs that were received in that month that had been answered by the end of that month. In March the average time taken for PQs to be answered was 6.8 days, a decrease from 8.5 days in February. To note, there will be some fluctuation in the previous month averages since the last report, as more overdue PQs have been answered. However, the trend line demonstrates our steady progress on this metric since the introduction of the PQ Recovery Plan in September. The final graph in Annex C evidences how the backlog has decreased and how we have really prioritised answering the oldest PQs. Now we have just a marginal number of PQs over 3 months old.

Please do ask 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 April data to provide to you.

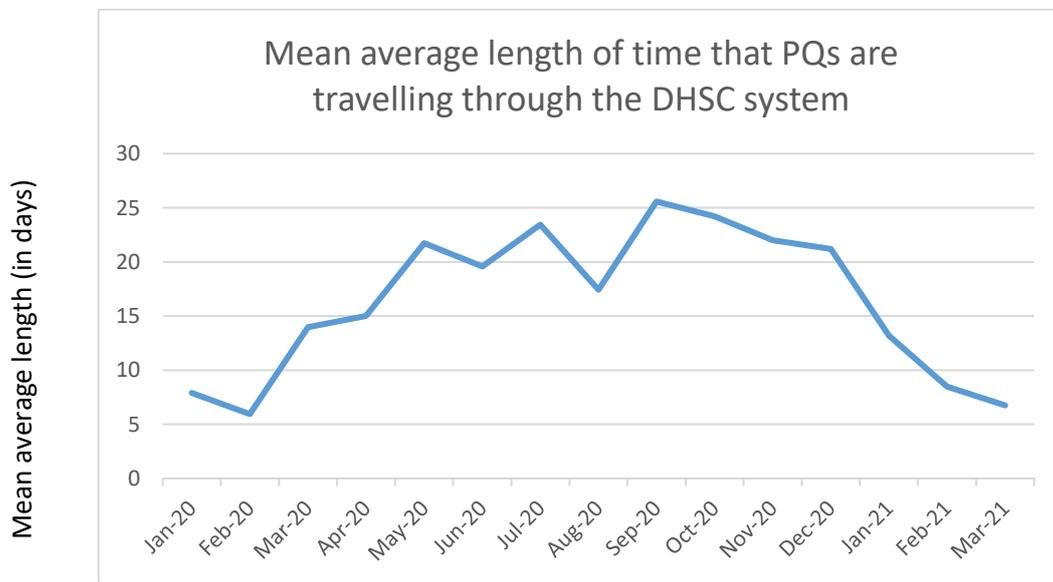
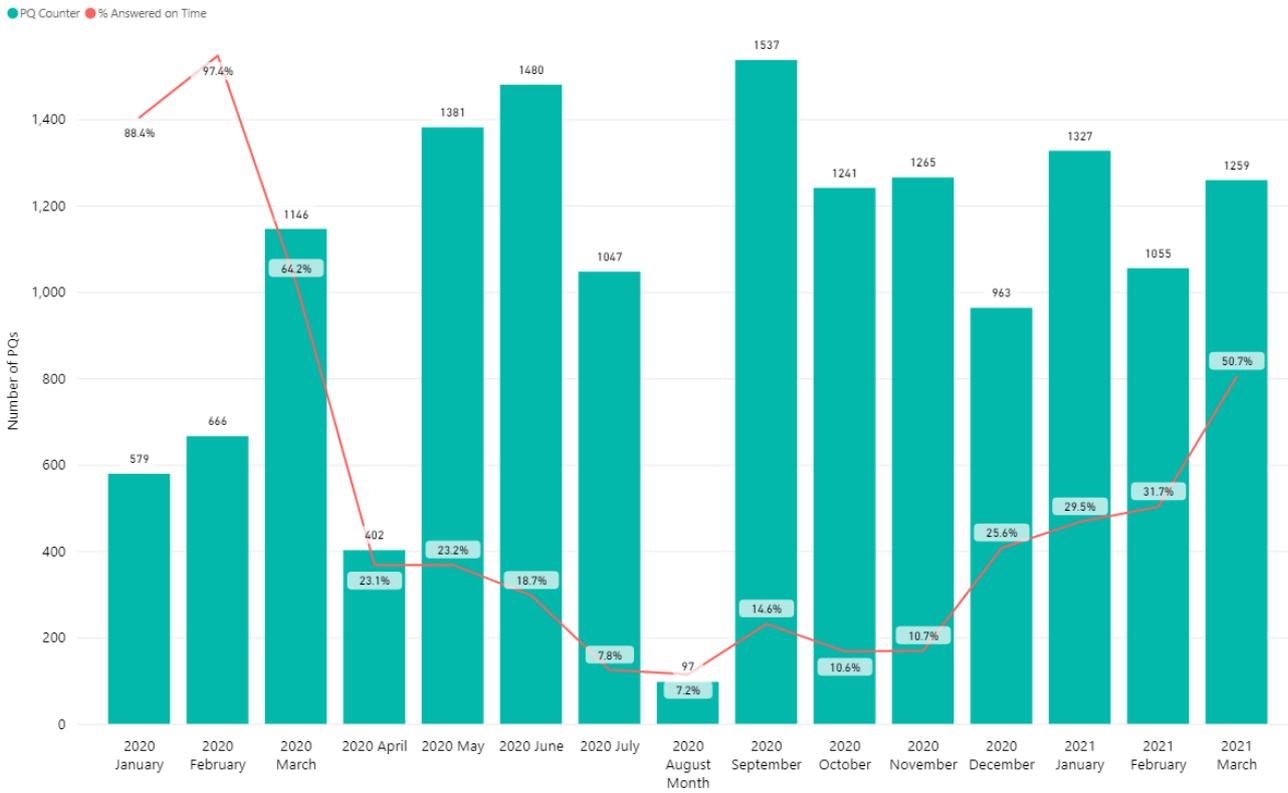
I am copying this letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', is written above a stylized signature that appears to be 'Edward Argar'.

EDWARD ARGAR MP

Annex A

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



Month in which the PQ was received by the department

Percentage of Overdue PQs by Time Overdue on 1st of Month



Please note this graph shows the end position of the month labelled, so the last data set labelled as March shows the position as of 01 April.