



PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

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Professor Sir Ian Diamond
National Statistician
By email

14th April 2020

Dear Sir Ian,

Every day at the Government's press conference, the public is sadly updated on the number of new cases of and deaths from Covid-19. I understand that these figures are based on admissions to and deaths at hospital, and do not include those who are in the community, including in care homes. These figures are published by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

These figures are different to the data sets produced by the Office of National Statistics of Deaths Registered in England and Wales, which include later-registered deaths. This data set has been produced for many years, giving a long series, and it is very useful that the ONS has now added a line to reflect the number of deaths where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate.

At this time, many international comparisons are being made when considering the spread of and response to the pandemic in the UK. As the Principal Advisor to the Government on statistics, do you believe these comparisons should be made based on the DHSC statistics or the ONS statistics? And when the Government is making policy decisions, such as whether to extend the lockdown or whether schools can reopen, do you believe the underlying modelling should be using the DHSC figures or the ONS figures?

The Code of Practice for Statistics has three pillars, Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. I would be grateful for your assessment of the statistics that the Government quotes each day against these pillars, given that this is the headline given to the public each day and it does not include some of the oldest and most vulnerable in society because, for example, it does not report on care homes. With directors of charities suggesting that the Government is "airbrushing older people out" of the Covid-19 figures, your view would be helpful for the Committee to put questions to the Government about how it is reporting. I'd be grateful for a response to this letter by Wednesday 22 April.

William Wragg MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee