

**Email of 4 March 2009 to the Clerk of the Committee from the Head of
Communications and Parliamentary Relations, UK Statistics Authority**

Thank you for your email dated 12 February. I apologise for the delay in responding. The Committee asked for sight of the email trail which led to Sir Michael Scholar writing to Jeremy Heywood, Permanent Secretary at 10, Downing Street on 12 December 2008 regarding the release of hospital admission statistics as part of a Government announcement about knife crime on 11 December. The email trail is attached. We have followed the usual convention, redacting the names of junior officials at grades below Deputy Director (Grade 5, Senior Civil Service) level or where we have been unable to establish the grade of the individual concerned. Please let me know if you would like any further information or clarification.

From: MCavanagh@no10 [REDACTED]
Sent: 10/12/2008 11:59

To: Mario.Dunn@dh [REDACTED]
Cc: GBeales@no10 [REDACTED]
Number 10 official

Subject: knife wounding figures

Mario - we spoke. Here is the statement that the PM would like us to publish tomorrow as part of the knife crime announcement. As discussed, like the equivalent CJS figures, this does cover stats which are covered by national statistics, but it is only a subset and we will be making clear that these figs are provisional and the final figs, subject to the usual nat statistics rigour, will be coming out in the usual way (if there is any particular form of words you'd like us to use, to convey that, let me know).

Can you confirm whether this is ok as soon as possible, if poss by 2pm?

Thanks.

"Hospital admissions in the ten TKAP areas for knife or sharp instrument woundings were 27% lower for July to September 2008 compared to the same period in 2007."

From: Mario.Dunn@dh [REDACTED]
Sent: 10/12/2008 12:31

To: Department of Health official (policy); Department Of Health official (policy)
Cc: Department of Health official (private office)

Subject: Fw: knife wounding figures

URGENT

Assume ok to clear this?

From: Department of Health official (policy)
Sent: 10 December 2008 13:16

To: Mario.Dunn@dh [REDACTED]
Cc: Department Of Health official (policy)
Department of Health official (private office);
NHS Information Centre statistical officer;
NHS Information Centre statistical officer

Subject: Re: Fw: knife wounding figures
Importance: High

Mario,

I just tried to call.

I have spoken to [REDACTED] at the Information Centre and she is seeking clearance to publish this information. She is aware of the deadline and we will aim to get back to you by 14:00.

Assuming we do get clearance, the statistic should be rephrased as:

"Hospital admissions in the nine TKAP areas in England for assault by a sharp object (including knives) were 27% lower for July to September 2008 compared to the same period in 2007."

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: NHS Information Centre statistical officer
Sent: 10/12/2008 13:56

To: Department of Health official (policy), Mario.Dunn@dh [REDACTED]
Cc: Department Of Health official (policy)
Department of Health Official (private office);
NHS Information Centre statistical officer;
Andy.Sutherland@ic.nhs [REDACTED]
NHS Information Centre statistical officer

Subject: RE: Fw: knife wounding figures

[REDACTED]

I've spoken to a number of people here, including the Head of Profession at the NHS IC and our view is that these provisional data are NOT released.

Our reasons are:

- 1) As explained already these are provisional data for 2007/08 and 2008/09 and therefore they are potentially inaccurate and may possibly give the wrong impression.
- 2) If we allowed these data to be published, we open ourselves up to provide these provisional data to others who may ask for data which shows different trends.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Department of Health official (policy)
Sent: 10 December 2008 15:54

To: NHS Information Centre statistical officer
Cc: Andy.Sutherland@ic.nhs; [REDACTED]
NHS Information Centre statistical officer;
Department Of Health official (policy)
NHS Information Centre statistical officer;
Mario.Dunn@dh; [REDACTED]
Department of Health official (private office);
Department of Health Statistician
Department Of Health official (policy)

Subject: RE: knife wounding figures
Importance: High

[REDACTED]

I have tried to call you and Andy but you are both in meetings.

For your information, I have passed on your concerns regarding the release of this data and outlined the Departmental position to all concerned - that we would not seek to overrule the Information Centre on this matter.

However, I have also been informed that Number 10 are adamant about the need to publish this statistic. As a result, I have been informed that they are likely to publish the data irrespective of the concerns raised.

Happy to discuss.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Andy.Sutherland@ic.nhs [REDACTED]

Sent: 10 December 2008 16:36

To: Department of Health official (policy); NHS Information Centre statistical officer

Cc: NHS Information Centre statistical officer;
Department Of Health official (policy)
NHS Information Centre statistical officer;
Mario.Dunn@dh [REDACTED]
Department of Health official (private office);
Department of Health Statistician
Department Of Health official (policy)

Subject: RE: knife wounding figures

[REDACTED]

I have discussed this with ONS and within the IC. If No10 go ahead and publish against our will then they are going against two fairly fundamental principles of statistics:

- (a) that decisions on publication of statistics are taken by professionals and not by politicians;
- (b) that publications of statistics are preannounced - we don't just publish out of the blue.

I have no wish to be awkward, but if they are insistent on this course of action then I will need to raise it with Karen Dunnell, the National Statistician. No10 have just supported setting up the UK Statistics Authority and a new pre-release access order tightening up on arrangements in order to build trust - this goes right against these developments.

On a practical note, this will look to observers as if the govt has cherry picked the good news and forced out publication for political ends - is this really what they want?

Andy

Andy Sutherland
Programme Head, Population and Resources
Head of Profession for Statistics

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

andy.sutherland@ic.nhs [REDACTED]

From: Andy.Sutherland@ic.nhs [REDACTED]
Sent: 10/12/2008 16:57

To: Office for National Statistics official (policy)
cc: NHS Information Centre statistical officer

Subject: for info at this stage - FW: knife wounding figures

[REDACTED]

Just for info at this stage and so that you are aware of the advice I have given. I (or probably [REDACTED] as I am on a train tomorrow) will speak further with you if necessary.

Andy

Andy Sutherland
Programme Head, Population and Resources
Head of Profession for Statistics

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
andy.sutherland@ic.nhs [REDACTED]

From: Mike.Hughes@ons [REDACTED]
Sent: 11/12/2008 08:35

To: Number 10 official (private office)
cc: Karen.Dunnell@ons [REDACTED]

Subject: FOR URGENT ATTENTION OF JEREMY HEYWOOD - Knife wounding figures

Karen Dunnell, the National Statistician, has spoken to Jeremy this morning about the inclusion of certain unpublished statistics in a statement the PM may be making. Further information is provided below.

Mike Hughes
Director
National Statistics and Policy Group
Office for National Statistics

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Mike.Hughes@ons
Sent: 11 December 2008 11:03

To: Number 10 official
Cc: Karen.Dunnell@ons

Subject: Knife wounding figures

As discussed.

I understand that the Information Centre currently provide this information to No 10 for management purposes, with provisos that the figures aren't final and aren't for publication.

The Code of Practice doesn't specify the handling of statistics derived from administrative data per se but the relevant principles of the Code are that;

- the Head of Profession will decide the publication date for the derived statistics
- the publication date will be pre-announced.

Happy to discuss further. I'm best contacted on my mobile

Mike

Mike Hughes
Director
National Statistics and Policy Group
Office for National Statistics

From: Number 10 official
Sent: 11/12/2008 11:22

To: Mike.Hughes@ons
Cc: Karen.Dunnell@ons, jheywood@no10

Subject: RE: Knife wounding figures [UNCLASSIFIED] [Non-Record]

Thanks Mike, I am most grateful to you for bringing this to my attention and am pursuing urgently at this end.

Regards