
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Rt. Hon. Andy Burnham MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

20 November 2014

Dear Andy

STATISTICS ON GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Thank you for your letter of 5 November about statements made by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Health that there are a thousand more GPs in England than when the Government came to power.

The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) publishes numbers of GPs in its annual statistical release *General and Personal Medical Services: England*¹. The data are taken from an annual census of all GPs which records the position as at 30 September each year. Statistics showing the numbers of GPs as at 30 September 2009 were published in March 2010, and hence were the latest published figures at the time of the General Election in May 2010.

Annex A to this letter presents three tables, drawn from the HSCIC release, showing a time series for the number of GPs as at 30 September from 2009 to 2013 for headcount and full-time equivalent (FTE), with a breakdown by type of GP – see Annex B for definitions. Table 1 shows the headcount time series with a line to show a change in methodology. Table 2 shows the 2009 headcount figure recalculated on the new basis for demonstration purposes only. Table 3 presents the FTE time series from 2009 to 2013 with the actual change for 2009-2013 and 2010-2013. This shows that:

- For all GPs (*including* Registrars and Retainers) there was an increase of 209 GPs between 30 September 2009 and 30 September 2013, and an increase of 1,051 GPs between 30 September 2010 and 30 September 2013.
- For GPs (*excluding* Registrars and Retainers) there was a decrease of 36 GPs between 30 September 2009 and 30 September 2013 – this was the number you quoted in your letter - and an increase of 719 GPs between 30 September 2010 and 30 September 2013.

Because numbers of GPs are collected as an annual snapshot as at end September, it is not possible to determine, from the published National Statistics, the number of GPs when the Government came to power. A more precise way of describing changes since 2009 would be as 'change from the position in September 2009, the latest available figures at the time of the

¹ <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB13849/nhs-staf-2003-2013-gene-prac-rep.pdf>, published March 2014.

General Election', and changes since 2010 as 'change from the position in September 2010, the most recent figures after the General Election'.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'D'.

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Annex A

Table 1 : General Medical Practitioners: headcount, 2009-2013

England	Headcount				
	2009	2010 ⁽¹⁾	2011 ⁽¹⁾	2012 ⁽¹⁾	2013 ⁽¹⁾
All Practitioners	40,269	39,409	39,780	40,265	40,236
Practitioners (excluding Registrars & Retainers)	35,917	35,120	35,415	35,527	35,561
GP Providers	27,613	27,036	27,218	26,886	26,635
Salaried/Other GPs	8,304	8,319	8,585	8,898	9,153
GP Registrars ⁽³⁾	3,881	3,880	4,013	4,426	4,404
GP Retainers	471	419	365	321	284

⁽¹⁾ The new headcount methodology is not fully comparable with data for years prior to 2010, due to improvements that make it a more stringent count of absolute staff numbers. Headcount for 2009 has been recalculated based on the new methodology and this is shown in table 2.

Headcount totals are unlikely to equal the sum of components. Further information on the headcount methodology is available in the Census publication

⁽³⁾ There are an additional 452 (2013) and 440 (2012) GP Registrars not included in this table, paid via the Electronic Staff Record System (ESR). These ESR records are included in the Medical and Dental Census. Data unavailable for years prior to 2012

Figures exclude GP locums

Data as at 30 September each year

Annex A (continued)

Table 2 : General Medical Practitioners: headcount with revised 2009 based on methodological change, 2009-2013

England	Headcount				
	2009 ⁽¹⁾	2010	2011	2012	2013
All Practitioners	39,211	39,409	39,780	40,265	40,236
Practitioners (excluding Registrars & Retainers)	34,978	35,120	35,415	35,527	35,561
GP Providers	27,194	27,036	27,218	26,886	26,635
Salaried/Other GPs	7,985	8,319	8,585	8,898	9,153
GP Registrars ⁽³⁾	3,780	3,880	4,013	4,426	4,404
GP Retainers	468	419	365	321	284

⁽¹⁾ The new headcount methodology is not fully comparable with data for years prior to 2010, due to improvements that make it a more stringent count of absolute staff numbers. Headcount for 2009 has been recalculated based on the new methodology and this is shown in table 2.

Headcount totals are unlikely to equal the sum of components. Further information on the headcount methodology is available in the Census publication

⁽³⁾ There are an additional 452 (2013) and 440 (2012) GP Registrars not included in this table, paid via the Electronic Staff Record System (ESR). These ESR records are included in the Medical and Dental Census. Data unavailable for years prior to 2012

Figures exclude GP locums

Data as at 30 September each year

Annex A (continued)

Table 3 : General Medical Practitioners: full time equivalents, 2009-2013

England							Full Time Equivalent	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2009-2013	Difference 2010-2013	
All Practitioners	36,085	35,243	35,319	35,871	36,294	209	1,051	
Practitioners (excluding Registrars & Retainers)	32,111	31,356	31,391	31,578	32,075	-36	719	
GP Providers	25,378	24,394	24,415	24,095	24,043	-1,335	-351	
Salaried/Other GPs	6,733	6,962	6,976	7,483	8,032	1,299	1,070	
GP Registrars ⁽¹⁾	3,659	3,718	3,784	4,138	4,093	434	375	
GP Retainers	315	169	143	155	126	-190	-43	

⁽¹⁾There are an additional 452 (2013) and 440 (2012) GP Registrars not included in this table, paid via the Electronic Staff Record System (ESR). These ESR records are included in the Medical and Dental Census. Data unavailable for years prior to 2012.

Figures exclude GP locums

Data as at 30 September each year

Source: General and Personal Medical Services: England
Health and Social Care Information Centre

Categories and Definitions of General Practitioners (GPs)

A 'General Practitioner' is a medical practitioner who treats all illnesses and provides preventative care and health education for patients of all ages.

'All Practitioners' include GP Providers, Salaried/Other GPs, Registrars and Retainers.

'Practitioners' are All Practitioners excluding Registrars and Retainers.

A GP Registrar is a fully registered practitioner who is being trained for general practice under an arrangement approved by the Secretary of State.

GP Retainers are practitioners who provide service sessions in general practice. They are employed by the partnership to undertake set sessions, or such a limited 'part-time' pattern of work, being allowed to work a maximum of 4 sessions of approximately half a day each week.