Out of Hours Primary Care Services in Scotland

1 April 2014 – 22 April 2020

An Official Statistics statistical release for Scotland

Publication date: 05 May 2020

About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides an update on statistics on patients attending Out of Hours (OOH) Primary Care services. Patients attend these services when their registered GP Practices are closed and they need urgent care. Monthly and daily data are presented from 1 April 2014 up to 22 April 2020. Commencing the 23 March COVID-19 activity at Hubs/Assessment Centres has been recorded on the Out of Hours IT system, ADASTRA, and daily data has been supplied to Public Health Scotland. The data contained in this report excludes this COVID-19 activity taking place in the COVID-19 Hubs/Assessment areas. Data on attendances during the out of hours period at Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments are also presented.

Main Points

• Since the outbreak of COVID-19 there has been a decline in the number of OOH Primary Care contacts compared to previous months. For the month of March 2020 there were 55,805 cases compared to 71,435 in March 2019, a reduction of 22 percent. There have also been falls in the number of A&E attendances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic over a similar time period.

• In a typical year one in six of the Scottish population (around 850,000 people) contact OOH Primary Care services each year, which results in just under a million consultations.

• In the latest calendar year, home visits accounted for around 1 in 5 (162,000) contacts with OOH Primary Care services. Nearly six out of ten contacts (58%) took place in a Primary Care Emergency Centre.

Monthly Number of contacts/consultations in OOH Primary Care and attendances at A&E Services (Out of Hours period only) NHSScotland, April 2014 – March 2020

1 Please note we are currently unable to identify COVID-19 related activity for NHS Grampian
December continues to be OOH Primary care services busiest month with around 80,000 contacts and 87,000 consultations in 2019.

During the summer A&E services have more attendances in the out of hours period, than OOH Primary Care cases, possibly as a result of longer daylight hours and greater risk of injuries. During the winter months and months with public holidays there are more OOH Primary Care cases.

**Background**

From April 2014, data on patient contacts at OOH Primary Care services have been collected across Scotland and maintained by IPHS in the national data warehouse. Data are collected on a local IT system (Adastra), then extracted and submitted to the datamart on a weekly basis.

Patient consultations are recorded as an attendance at Primary Care Emergency Centres, Home Visits and/or GP OOH Advice. A patient with an OOH contact can have more than one consultation type (e.g. GP OOH advice followed by home visit).

It should be noted that in the areas where only aggregate A&E data is returned to PHS (typically the minor injury units in NHS Grampian and NHS Highland), there is likely to be an undercount of patients seen. This does not make a significant difference to the overall results. The time period being compared relates to when both services are open i.e. the out of hours time period. This includes evenings, weekends and Easter, Christmas and New Year public holidays.

**Contact**

**Kathy McGregor**
Principal Information Analyst
0131 275 6551
k.mcgregor2@nhs.net

**Fiona MacKenzie**
Service Manager
0131 275 6515
f.mackenzie@nhs.net

**Further Information**

Data tables for this publication are available along with relevant background information, glossary and metadata documents. This publication should be viewed as a complimentary analysis to other publications on emergency and urgent care.

**NHS Performs**

A selection of information from this publication is included in NHS Performs. NHS Performs is a website that brings together a range of information on how hospitals and NHS Boards within NHSScotland are performing.

---

**PHS and Official Statistics**

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Further information about our statistics.