

SECOND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF RT HON JEREMY HUNT MP

Witness Name: Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP

Statement No: 2

Exhibits: JH/11 – JH/23

Dated: 19 July 2023

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

SECOND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE RT HON JEREMY HUNT MP

I, Jeremy Hunt, will say as follows:

1. I make this statement pursuant to a Rule 9 request from the UK Covid-19 Inquiry ('the Inquiry') dated 27 June 2023.
2. I gave oral evidence to the Inquiry on 21 June 2023, in the Inquiry's Module 1 public hearing. The Rule 9 request seeks further information in relation to a number of comments I made during the course of my oral evidence.

Section 1: NHS workforce figures

3. I am asked for the source of the figures I quoted in two comments regarding the NHS workforce:
"So I decided we did need more capacity, and I think the number of employees went up by over 100,000 during my time as Health Secretary, the number of doctors went up by 17,000"
"I think the number of nurses increased by 24,000 during the period that I was Health Secretary"
4. I was the Secretary of State for Health and then the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care ('Health Secretary'), between 4 September 2012 and 9 July 2018.

5. The authoritative source of figures for the NHS workforce is provided in monthly publications produced by NHS England (formerly by NHS Digital, which has now been merged into NHS England). I exhibit the publication from April 2023, from which the figures below are drawn, as JH/11 – INQ000221938.
6. Changes in the NHS workforce over a period of time are best understood by looking at the workforce for the same month in each year – for example, January to January, or September to September. That is because of annual, cyclical movements of NHS staff. Comparing figures from September 2012 to July 2018 would therefore give a slightly misleading picture.
7. It should also be noted that there is not consistent general practice data going back to 2012, and so these figures therefore relate to NHS Hospital and Community Health Service staff only ('HCHS'). In any event, the number of staff working in general practice is very considerably smaller than HCHS staff.
8. The figures for full-time equivalent HCHS staff are as follows¹:

September 2012: 975,876	December 2012: 979,204
September 2018: 1,074,209	December 2018: 1,082,978
Increase: 98,333	Increase: 103,774

9. The figures for actual headcount of HCHS staff are as follows²:

September 2012: 1,117,038	December 2012: 1,119,453
September 2018: 1,216,719	December 2018: 1,226,362
Increase: 99,681	Increase: 106,909

10. Therefore, depending on the month chosen, the NHS workforce increased by just under or a little over 100,000, during my period as Health Secretary.
11. In relation to numbers of doctors and nurses, I am afraid my recollection of these figures was less accurate when giving oral evidence to the Inquiry.

¹ These figures can be found in row 47 of tab '1. England'.

² These figures can be found in row 12 of tab '1. England'.

12. The figures for full-time equivalent HCHS doctors are as follows³:

September 2012: 99,529	December 2012: 99,759
September 2018: 111,247	December 2018: 112,072
Increase: 11,717	Increase: 12,312

13. The figures for actual headcount of HCHS doctors are as follows⁴:

September 2012: 106,150	December 2012: 106,422
September 2018: 118,510	December 2018: 119,621
Increase: 12,360	Increase: 13,199

14. As such, in the first statement quoted above, I should have given the figure for the increase in numbers of doctors as being approximately 12,000.

15. The figures for full-time equivalent HCHS nurses are as follows (actual headcount numbers are not available, except aggregated with health visitors, so I refer only to full-time equivalent figures here)⁵:

September 2012: 263,720	December 2012: 265,374
September 2018: 277,790	December 2018: 280,412
Increase: 14,070	Increase: 15,038

16. As such, in the second statement quoted above, I should have given the figure for the increase in numbers of nurses as being approximately 14,000.

Section 2: DHSC and NHS budget

17. I am asked for the source of the figures I quoted in one comment regarding the NHS budget:

"When I arrived the NHS budget was £101 billion, when I left it was £124 billion, that was a negotiation for an additional £33 billion"

³ These figures can be found in row 51 of tab '1. England'.

⁴ These figures can be found in row 16 of tab '1. England'.

⁵ These figures can be found in row 13 of tab '2. Nurses by setting'. Figures for FTE and actual headcount of nurses on tab '1. England' include health visitors (see rows 28 and 62 of that tab) and are therefore not used here.

18. Regarding the figures for the NHS budget, I accidentally substituted the figures for the overall DH/DHSC budget, for the NHS budget. The correct figures (for resource Departmental Expenditure Limits, 'RDEL', excluding depreciation) are as follows:

	Departmental budget	NHS budget
2012/13	£100,514 million	£98,022 million
2018/19	£124,359 million	£114,331 million

19. The figures for 2018/19 are drawn from HM Treasury's 'Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2022', which I exhibit as JH/12 – INQ000221940. The departmental RDEL (excluding depreciation) can be found at table 1.5, on page 23. The NHS RDEL (excluding depreciation) can be found in the table at the bottom of page 18.

20. The departmental budget figure for 2012/13 is drawn from HM Treasury's 'Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2016', which I exhibit as JH/13 – INQ000221942. The departmental RDEL (excluding depreciation) can be found at table 1.5, on page 22.

21. It is difficult to find an appropriate comparator figure for the NHS budget in 2012/13 as compared to 2018/19 due to changes in the structure of the health system. The £98,022 million comparator figure provided in the table above is calculated by DHSC officials from DHSC's 2012/13 Annual Report and Accounts (previously exhibited as JH/9 – INQ000146023) as follows:

- a. Primary care trust and strategic health authority RDEL: £98,829 million (see page 23 of JH/9, box labelled 'SHA/PCTs');
- b. Plus NHS Providers RDEL, which was a negative figure in 2012/13 due to a surplus: -£433 million (see page 23 of JH/9, box labelled 'Providers');
- c. Deduct primary care trust depreciation: -£362.933 million (see page 112 of JH/9);
- d. Deduct primary care trust amortisation: -£9.751 million (see page 112 of JH/9);
- e. Deduct strategic health authority depreciation: -£1.485 million (see page 112 of JH/9);
- f. Deduct strategic health authority amortisation: -£0.146 million (see page 112 of JH/9);

g. This gives a final figure of £98,021.685 million, rounded in the table above to £98,022 million. This is an NHS spend figure which can be compared to the figures in later 'Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses' publications.

22. The £33 billion figure in my comment refers to discussions regarding a possible increase in the NHS budget that were underway within government at the end of my tenure as Health Secretary.

Section 3: OECD comparisons

23. I am asked for the source for two comments I made regarding comparative health spending in OECD countries:

"I seem to remember that we were generally bang on the Western European average and the OECD average [spending on the NHS/national healthcare system as a proportion of GDP] during the period I was Health Secretary. I don't have the exact figures in front of me, but I think we were broadly at the average level"

"I think the latest figures I've seen, out of the 38 OECD countries we're fifth in terms of the proportion of GDP we invest in health"

24. During the period I was Health Secretary, the UK's ranking compared to the other OECD countries for health spending as a proportion of GDP was as follows:

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
13 th of 34	13 th of 34	12 th of 34	14 th of 34	14 th of 35 ⁶	14 th of 35	14 th of 36 ⁷

25. These rankings are derived from OECD.stat, the OECD's data platform, and I exhibit spreadsheets downloaded from that platform as JH/14 – INQ000221937 (2012); JH/15 – INQ000221939 (2013); JH/16 – INQ000221943 (2014); JH/17 – INQ000221934 (2015); JH/18 – INQ000221941 (2016); JH/19 – INQ000221932 (2017); JH/20 – INQ000221936 (2018).

26. At the time of my oral evidence, the most recent OECD figures that had been published were for 2021, and these showed the UK as fifth out of 38 countries⁸ for health

⁶ Latvia joined the OECD during the course of 2016; it, and other countries joining during this period (listed in subsequent footnotes), are included in the rankings for the first year that they joined and each subsequent year.

⁷ Lithuania joined the OECD during the course of 2018.

⁸ Colombia and Costa Rica having joined the OECD in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

spending as a proportion of GDP. However, on 3 July 2023 the OECD published updated health statistics. These contain two significant changes:

- a. Comparative data for 2022 was released. In 2022, the UK ranked sixth of the 38 OECD countries for health spending as a proportion of GDP; I exhibit the OECD.stat spreadsheet for 2022 as JH/21 – INQ000221933.
- b. As part of the release of new data, the OECD takes the opportunity to revise previous estimates where more accurate information has subsequently been received, and so it is not unusual for there to be minor revisions to previous years' rankings following an update. On 3 July 2023 the OECD updated their data for 2021, resulting in the UK now being ranked third of the 38 OECD countries for health spending as a percentage of GDP for that year. I exhibit the current OECD.stat spreadsheet for 2021 as JH/22 – INQ000221935, showing the UK as third in the rankings. I also exhibit OECD data from 2022 covering multiple years including 2021, as JH/23 – INQ000221931, showing the UK as fifth in the rankings in 2021⁹; the UK's ranking remained fifth until the 3 July 2023 update.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 19 July 2023

⁹ As this is no longer current OECD data, it had to be obtained in a different way from the OECD website and so the spreadsheet layout and contents appear slightly differently. See cell AR38 for the UK's ranking.