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Deputy Convener  
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
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18 April 2023

Dear Deputy Convener

I am writing to to draw your attention to the fact that the publication of the annual National Records of Scotland (NRS) Drug Death National Statistics for 2022 will occur in August 2023 rather than July 2023.

NRS has informed my officials that the cause of this brief delay was technical issues that were experienced with some toxicology testing equipment. Those technical issues have now been resolved, but the delay incurred means that the publication cannot be produced to the original timetable. I have been reassured by SPA, COPFS and NRS that the process around processing drug deaths continues to be robust.

In accordance with the Official Statistics Code of Practice, NRS are required to make the public, and other users, aware of any risks to intended publication dates and the revised plans. They therefore updated the website to notify about the delay late on 17 April.

I hope this notification is helpful to the Committee for planning purposes.

**ELENA WHITHAM MSP**  
Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy

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