
Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

Luke Pollard MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

23 February 2022

Dear Mr Pollard,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking how many death records listed air pollution as a cause of death in (a) Plymouth, (b) the South West and (c) England in each of the last five years **(125491)**.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for statistics on deaths for England and Wales.

Causes of death are certified in most cases by a doctor, who records the sequence of medical conditions and relevant events leading to, or contributing to, the death, based on the deceased's healthcare records and other available information, such as laboratory tests or post-mortem investigation. Some deaths are certified by a coroner who determines the causes of death following an inquest, based on all the available evidence.

It is unusual for wider contextual factors such as exposure to pollution or air quality to be recorded among the causes of death. No deaths have been recorded in the past 5 years, though one death in England in 2013 had exposure to air pollution (International Classification of Diseases, Tenth revision (ICD-10) code Z581) recorded on the death certificate. This did not occur in Plymouth or the South West.

It may be more informative to consider epidemiological studies which estimate numbers or proportions of deaths which can be attributed to exposure to pollution or poor air quality. A number of reports have been published by Public Health England (now the UK Health Security Agency) on different aspects of air pollution and health¹.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Sir Ian Diamond

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-air-pollution/health-matters-air-pollution>