
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Sir Andrew Green KCMG
Weston House
Deddington
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Dear Sir Andrew

STATISTICS ON THE POINTS BASED SYSTEM

I am writing further to your letters of 5 and 19 April and my reply dated 28 April in which I promised to write again to you about the status and source of statistics on the Points Based System quoted in the former Prime Minister's speech of 31 March. I am sorry that it has taken us a while to complete our inquiries and to furnish you with a detailed reply.

I asked the Statistics Authority's Monitoring and Assessment team to review the statistics quoted in the former Prime Minister's speech against published statistical sources in this area, and to liaise with the National Statistician's Office and Home Office statisticians as necessary. Their findings are set out in the attached note which I hope you will find useful.

I am copying this letter to the National Statistician, Jil Matheson, and to the Chief Statistician at the Home Office, David Blunt.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Immigration statistics – Letter from Sir Andrew Green, 5 April 2010

Sir Andrew Green wrote to the Statistics Authority querying data quoted by the (then) Prime Minister on 31 March 2010. In his speech Mr Brown quoted statistics derived from administrative records relating to the Points Based System (PBS) on numbers that have settled under Tier 1, and also under Tier 2 or its equivalents¹. Mr Brown additionally quoted an estimated figure expected to settle under Tier 4.

The Statistics Authority reviewed the figures from the Points Based System in comparison with official statistics published by the Home Office in Table 1 of *Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary, United Kingdom, October-December 2009*. Home Office statisticians have provided us with an additional explanation of the quoted figures, from their own analysis.

Tier 1

Mr Brown quoted a figure of 30,000 workers entering via Tier 1 of the PBS:

“These 30,000 people from around the world are the professionals who we most want”.

The number of main applicants issued with visas to enter the UK via Tier 1 since its commencement is 27,080 to the end of 2009.

Tier 2

Mr Brown commented in relation to Tier 2 entrants:

“Because of our actions to train the UK workforce – we are able to reduce the number of people coming under tier 2. Specific skills needed by employers are advertised in job centre plus for four weeks and increasingly filled by local people. The 30,000 who employers hire from abroad come here only after the jobs have been advertised locally in jobcentre plus for 4 weeks. And we are succeeding. A fall from 99 thousand in 2007 to 81 thousand in 2008, to 63 thousand in 2009 for tier 2 or equivalents on the previous system.”

Neither the Home Office nor the Statistics Authority has, as yet, been able to trace the source of the figure of 30,000. Should we obtain more information on this, we will inform you.

We have confirmed that the time series quoted matches the published statistics and that the figures were rounded correctly. The Home Office has confirmed that the reference to ‘or equivalents on the previous system’ is a precise description and a correct representation of the statistics. In our view the reference to ‘people coming under tier 2’ indicates that it is appropriate to include both main applicants and dependents in these totals.

Tier 4

Mr Brown quoted an estimate of the number of students who will enter the UK via Tier 4 during the financial year 2010/11:

“...it is expected that these changes will see around 40 thousand fewer students coming to the UK in 2010/11 than otherwise would have been the case.”

¹ ‘Tier 2 or equivalents’ combines the categories: PBS Tier 2, Work permit holders, and Other employment/leading to settlement’

The Home Office has told the National Statistician's Office that the UK Border Agency estimated the figure of 40 thousand from management information and that it is not drawn from official statistics.

Such estimates are necessarily ball-park figures and are not produced as official statistics. In respect of the other statistics on the Points Based System, we found it relatively difficult to trace published sources for some of them and the Authority has proposed to the Home Office that steps be taken to bring together a regular summary in a statistical publication (see the Chair's 30 April letter to the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office regarding this matter).²

UK Statistics Authority
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² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-michael-scholar-to-sir-david-normington-30-april-2010.pdf>