
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Mark Harper MP
Minister for Disabled People
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
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10 March 2015

Dear Mr Harper

RELEASE DATE OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Thank you for your letter of 4 March drawing my attention to a statement made on 16 February on the Twitter account of Kate Green MP.

First, it is of course not possible to say definitively what the next set of statistics about Personal Independence Payments (PIP) will show until those statistics are published.

Second, the suggestion that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is hiding the release of PIP statistics by publishing them on Budget day – 18 March 2015 – is a serious matter. The Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics at DWP has confirmed that the release of quarterly official statistics about PIP is regularly and routinely scheduled to coincide with the release of other relevant DWP benefit statistics as well as the release of Labour Market Statistics by the Office for National Statistics. In addition the Deputy Head of Profession explained the following to Statistics Authority staff.

- i. DWP has released three sets of official statistics on PIP, plus two ad hoc releases. The first ad hoc release, published on 11 February 2014, was based on limited management information and was intended to support informed debate prior to the publication of the first set of official statistics (scheduled at the time for Spring 2014). The second ad hoc release, on 28 January 2015, was published to support your appearance before the Work and Pensions Select Committee, in the interests of transparency.
- ii. The three official statistics releases were published on Thursday 5 June 2014, Wednesday 17 September 2014, and Wednesday 17 December 2014, and the publication date of each of them was pre-announced.
- iii. The scheduled publication date for the next set of PIP quarterly statistics – 18 March 2015 – is consistent with the release pattern established by the last three releases of PIP quarterly statistics. This publication date was pre-announced on 16 February 2015, in line with established statistical practice.

- iv. The requirement in the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* that “the relevant statistical Head of Profession has the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases” was upheld in deciding the PIP release dates.

On the basis of this information I am satisfied that DWP’s decision to release the next quarterly PIP statistics on 18 March was made appropriately – independent decision making by the statistical Head of Profession, a pre-announced release date, and the continuation of an established and regular release pattern intended to enhance the coherence of the statistics. I have encouraged the Head of Profession to pre-announce the publication date of PIP statistics further into the future, in order to reduce the likelihood of challenge to DWP statistical practices.

I am copying this letter to Kate Green MP; John Pullinger, the National Statistician; Robert Devereux, Permanent Secretary to DWP; Neil McIvor, the Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics at DWP; and Ed Humpherson, the Authority’s Director General for Regulation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE