
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Mr D G Green
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Dear Mr Green

EHRC REPORT: SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATION AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Thank you for your letter of 20 July and for the enclosed report by Professor Mervyn Stone setting out the views of Civitas on the EHRC report on the allocation of social housing. I am sorry it has taken some time for us to consider this matter.

We have explored the substantive points raised by Professor Stone with the Equality and Human Rights Commission but have concluded that the matters at issue relate almost exclusively to the merits of the research itself, in particular whether the conclusions of the research are adequately supported by the statistical evidence, rather than the production or presentation of the official statistics which underlie the research.

The Board of the Statistics Authority considered whether, in view of this, it would be appropriate for us to make any further comment and decided that to do so would take us beyond our statutory remit. Our role relates to the production, presentation and, in some aspects, the use of official statistics but not to the quality of social research based on the statistics, unless this were to involve a specific misrepresentation of the statistics themselves. In this case, we do not see any misrepresentation of the statistics but rather a disagreement about whether the conclusions can be seen to follow from the available statistical evidence.

I hope you will understand that we cannot take on the role of commentator on the quality of government-sponsored research. To do so would extend an already wide remit beyond both our statutory authority and our competence. All we can say in this case is that we would expect all government funded social research to be subject to appropriate quality assurance and peer review processes to maintain public confidence in the evidence base for public policy.

In the course of considering your letter, EHRC presented us with various further comments and observations from the contractors who carried out the research. I am copying this letter to Karen Jochelson, the Director of Research at EHRC, who has indicated that she will forward these to you directly.

Yours sincerely

Michael Scholar

Sir Michael Scholar KCB