

From: Jonathan Portes
To: Sir Andrew Dilnot
Date: 14/04/2014 09:53
Subject: DWP statistics on migrants and benefits

Dear Andrew

You may have seen this report in the Sunday Telegraph, published online at 9pm on April 12, 2014.

"3,000 jobless European migrants on benefits"

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10762942/3000-jobless-European-migrants-on-benefits.html>

The first few paragraphs state:

"Thousands of European migrants are living off benefits after moving to Britain without a job, costing taxpayers £10 million a year in subsidised rent, new figures disclose. An estimated 3,000 unemployed immigrants arrive from Europe each year to claim Housing Benefit of about £100 a week, government analysis suggests. More than half continue to claim state support for housing costs for at least six months, while almost one-third have been receiving the hand-out for more than a year without working. The figures from the Department for Work and Pensions represent the first time the government has published an official estimate of the scale of so-called European "benefit tourism"."

The report also contains a direct quote from the Secretary of State:

"Speaking to The Telegraph, Iain Duncan Smith, the Work and Pensions Secretary, said: "The fact that this situation existed demonstrates why we were right to bring in reforms to prevent abuse of our welfare system.""

As of today, April 14 (10am) there is no trace on the gov.uk website of any publication at all containing these statistics. You will of course recall that in May 2013 you wrote to Mr Duncan Smith (in relation to another set of ad hoc statistics that appeared in the press before being published):

"We have also considered the two short statistical reports published on 12 April against the criteria that the Statistics Authority has published for identifying material that should be regarded as official statistics and published in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. These criteria are in essence that the statistics are used publicly in support of policy, or otherwise are seen to be of public significance. Clearly, the statistics in question qualify on both grounds.

"In the manner and form published, the statistics do not comply fully with the principles of the Code of Practice, particularly in respect of accessibility to the sources of the data, information about the methodology and quality of the statistics, and the suggestion that the statistics were shared with the media in advance of their publication."

On the face of it, the provision, by the Secretary of State, to the Telegraph, of unpublished statistics which clearly meet the criteria, is (another) direct breach of the Code of Practice.

Jonathan Portes
Director, National Institute of Economic and Social Research