



Sheila Gilmore MP
Edinburgh East Constituency

21 January 2014

Mr Andrew Dilnot
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 2QQ

Our Ref: MB/GILM02002/02140040
Your Ref:

Dear Mr Dilnot

On 20 November 2013 at the Work and Pensions Select Committee, the following exchange between myself, the Employment Minister Esther McVey and Director of Work Services Neil Couling took place:

Q559 Sheila Gilmore: *Can I take you back to the question of the postWork Programme people? This programme is not kicking in until April, but there have been people coming back from the Work Programme since last June. What is happening to them at the moment, and could you not have foreseen that there would be people coming back and get this set up earlier?*

Esther McVey: *They are getting support now, but what we have said is, "Okay, how will we deal with everybody in a more consistent way going forward? What are we going to do? What could we put in place?" and, equally, "What have we now got the money to do going further forward, with this extra pot of money, and equally, how have we analysed what has been going on at the Work Programme?" Those people are getting their support now.*

Neil Couling: *The good news is that we had 165,000 people back from the Work Programme so far. Of those, 7% have moved on to a different benefit, probably Employment Support Allowance, but about 16% have either got jobs or-on the measure that Ms Pearce was saying-have off-flowed, so we are having really rather a big success with Work Programme returners. Of that 165,000, 23% are no longer with us on Jobseeker's Allowance. We did have a plan for people coming back from the Work Programme. It is called the Mandatory Intervention Regime; we put it into all of the Jobcentres, and Jobcentres are really doing very well on this at the moment. There are some really quite tough discussions going on there, because some of the people coming back were the people we moved over to the Work Programme back in 2011, who had been with us for a number of years. There are people with some very long durations on benefit who we are actually finding work for, which is fantastic.*

I subsequently asked a parliamentary question so as to provide some context for the figures referred to by Mr Couling and received a response on 9 December:

Sheila Gilmore: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) with reference to the answer from Neil Couling of 20 November 2013 to question 559 to the Work and Pensions Select Committee, HC 479-vi, how many people have completed the Work Programme in each month since June 2013 in (a) the UK and (b) Scotland; and how many such people have stopped claiming either jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance. [178099]

(2) pursuant to the answer from the Work Services Director, Department for Work and Pensions, to question 559 at the Work and Pensions Select Committee evidence session on 20 November 2013, HC 479-vi, how many people have completed their time on the Work Programme in each month since June 2013 in (a) the UK and (b) Scotland; and how many of these groups have stopped claiming either jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance in (i) the UK and (ii) Scotland. [178483]

Esther McVey: The information requested on the number of people who have completed the Work programme since June 2013 will be derived from the Management Information shared by Neil Couling with the Work and Pensions Select Committee and will be included in the next quarterly release.

Information for Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Department for Social Development. Northern Ireland statistics can be found at: http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/stats_and_research.htm

In my view Mr Couling was making a point of some contention. However by using data that was not publically available at the time (and to my knowledge still isn't), it is difficult for those of us who take an interest in this area to question or hold him, the Ministers he reports to, or the Government as a whole to account.

I would be grateful for any comments you have on the practice of using unpublished statistics in this way. I would be particularly interested in whether this contravenes any UKSA or Government codes of practice.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Sheila Gilmore MP
Edinburgh East