



Cynulliad
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Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Ref: LW//CYFF/ONS

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Respondent Relations Team
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Dear Sir/Madam

Please find appended exchanges from the Plenary session, National Assembly for Wales, on the 10th March 2014.

The First Minister for Wales is claiming young unemployment in Wales is substantially lower in Wales than in England. I understand that the only statistics that showed this at the time were deemed by yourselves to be experimental statistics.

I copy below a briefing from our Members' Research Service which explains this:

Quarterly experimental youth unemployment statistics

*The ONS also publishes quarterly experimental statistics on unemployment by age group for the devolved nations and English regions. These are published as part of the ONS' Regional Labour Market Statistics, and are updated each month. They will therefore be updated tomorrow (19 March), and can be found in table X02 in the Regional Labour Market Statistics release, which is usually on the second page of data tables. One age group that figures are published for is the 16-24 age group. **These are the statistics that the Welsh Government has used to claim that youth unemployment in Wales is lower than the UK average.***

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Office of National Statistics

The ONS states that these estimates are derived from the same data source as the UK headline figures (which are updated each month), but due to the relatively small sample sizes and subsequent sampling variability, the figures should be used with caution and are designated as Experimental Statistics.¹ This means that the statistics do not meet the criteria for National Statistics that the annual statistics referred to above do. Table 1 shows the latest statistics for October to December 2013 for each of the devolved nations and English regions in comparison to the overall UK figure.

I am very concerned that our First Minister is using experimental statistics to make political points without acknowledging the nature of those statistics.

I am writing to ask therefore if you have a protocol governing the use of your statistics by Welsh Government Ministers in these circumstances.

If so, does the way the First Minister has used these statistics meet the obligations of that protocol?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

SIMON THOMAS AM
Mid & West Wales

Encl

¹ Office for National Statistics, [Regional Labour Market Statistics February 2014 – Table X02 Unemployment by age](#) [accessed 18 March 2014]

Questions to the First Minister

We are progressing our actions as outlined in the programme for government, focusing on growth and sustainable jobs. We have a variety of programmes to do this, including the provision of business support through Business Wales, information and communications technology support, and transport infrastructure improvements. We are now, of course, in a position where unemployment in Wales is lower than in England, and youth unemployment in Wales is substantially lower than in England.

Rhun ap Iorwerth

13:52 I have also been scratching my head in recent weeks hearing your claims that youth unemployment in Wales is lower than in other parts of the UK, when established figures suggest that it is, in fact, worse. Will you admit that the new figures that you have been using to quote the Office for National Statistics, due to its relatively small sample size and variability, should be treated with caution, and designated as experimental statistics? There is discrepancy, at best. I will put it on the record that I hope that you are right, but will you admit that painting the rosier picture possible is not the best way to make the Government work harder in order to get our young people back into work.

Carwyn Jones, First Minister

13:53 It is because Government has worked hard that we have so many young people going into work—8,563 of them, at the last count—through Jobs Growth Wales. I am not sure what the Member means about

established statistics. If he means statistics that his party has just made up, I do not know whether they are established statistics. The Office for National Statistics is the body that provides objective statistics for the whole of the UK. If he is saying that those statistics are, in some way, wrong he must justify that with equally objective and well-researched statistics of his own.

It is not right to say, of course, that there is not more that needs to be done. Of course there is. The rate of unemployment is still too high. Let us face it, if it was not for Jobs Growth Wales and the work that we have done with youth entrepreneurship, and if it was not for the investment that we have brought into Wales, investments like Pinewood Studios, and the huge increase in foreign direct investment and the increase in exports, we would not be in this position. We are in this position—although there is still more work to be done, of course—because of the actions of this Government.