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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Rt. Hon. Andrew Lansley CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Health  
Department of Health  
Richmond House, 79 Whitehall  
LONDON  
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22 September 2011

Dear Mr Lansley

**WITHDRAWAL OF FUNDING FOR HEALTH STATISTICS**

Thank you for your letter of 1 August in which you confirm that the Health and Social Care Information Centre will cease its contribution towards the costs of the ONS General Lifestyle Survey (GLF).

As was indicated in the Statistical Expenditure Report that I sent you under cover of my letter of 7 July, several of the long standing National Statistics series on smoking, drinking, and the use of health services will have to end. ONS will remove the questions on health and health determinants from the survey with effect from October 2011. The reduction of some £300,000 out of a £1.8 million budget cannot be accommodated in any other way.

In your letter you say that the Department of Health is working to identify the most cost-effective and appropriate way of collecting such information in the future. As you know, our view is that the best way of collecting the statistics is the way in which they have until now been collected, via the GLF. Users of the existing GLF data have previously highlighted the importance of this source, citing its large sample size, the wide variety of variables it offers for explanatory analysis, and the ability to compare data across Great Britain. Although the Health Survey for England includes many of the health related questions from the GLF, it has a substantially smaller sample size, does not allow country level comparisons and does not include such a wide variety of variables for explanatory analysis. So although it does, as you say, provide an alternative survey vehicle, it will not produce statistics consistent with those previously available, or to the same quality.

The Statistics Authority will assess whatever new statistical series are created in their place, under the terms of section 12 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, in order to ensure that any new statistics meet the standards of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, as the current GLF series does.

I am copying this letter to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, the National Statistician, and the Chair of the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee and the Chair of the House of Commons Health Committee.

Yours sincerely



**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**