

**Director General for Regulation**

John Pullinger  
National Statistician  
By email

26 January 2017

Dear John

**STATISTICS ON NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBERS ALLOCATED TO ADULT OVERSEAS NATIONALS**

We exchanged correspondence in spring 2016 about the coherence of DWP's National Statistics on National Insurance Numbers Allocated to Adult Overseas Nationals (NINos) and ONS's International Migration estimates<sup>1</sup>. I welcome the publication of the findings of a cross-government analytical project exploring the differences, as part of ONS's Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (MSQR) in May 2016. Since then, we have also spoken and agreed the need for continued cross-government work in this area.

The Office for Statistics Regulation has been undertaking a series of reviews to look at migration-related data sources and how these data are being used to understand patterns of migration to and from the UK. This has included an assessment of DWP's NINO statistics for compliance against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. This assessment is published today<sup>2</sup> and results in the temporary removal of the National Statistics designation from these statistics while DWP improves some aspects surrounding the publication of the statistics. Following this assessment we will be finalising reviews of (a) the quality of estimates of student migration and (b) estimates of non-UK citizens and non-UK born workers produced from the Labour Force Survey. We intend to engage you and other key audiences as appropriate, with an aim to publish our findings later this spring.

In addition to these specific reviews, I would like to make a broader point to you as National Statistician. Effective analysis of migration patterns relies on data from a wide range of sources. Our work on the NINO assessment reiterated the fact that there is a wider demand for analysis of migration patterns that the NINO statistics themselves cannot address, and fall outside of DWP's departmental remit.

It is therefore essential that you coordinate further development of a robust evidence base, using data from a wide range of sources, for understanding the patterns of international migration to the UK and that this is given sufficient priority by all departments and ONS. The cross-departmental efforts for this work to date have been encouraging, including the consultation on international migration statistics outputs which closed before Christmas<sup>3</sup>, and I am reassured by your commitment to lead and coordinate further development work. The success of this work in maximising public value will ultimately depend on a substantial and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Email-from-Ed-Humpherson-to-John-Pullinger-230316.pdf](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Email-from-Ed-Humpherson-to-John-Pullinger-230316.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/nino-allocations-to-adult-overseas-nationals>

<sup>3</sup> [www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/consultationsandsurveys/allconsultationsandsurveys/consultationoninternationalmigrationstatisticsoutputs](http://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/consultationsandsurveys/allconsultationsandsurveys/consultationoninternationalmigrationstatisticsoutputs)

continued cross-government commitment of resources, with all relevant government departments playing their full part.

I would therefore welcome your reassurance that you will ensure that this work is given sufficient priority by both ONS as lead and by all departments involved, and that funding can be made available to shine a light on these key questions. It will also be essential to have effective user engagement and clear, coordinated public communication at all stages of the work. I would welcome early publication of your development plans.

We will continue to monitor your progress towards bringing the various datasets together, and aim to publish the Office for Statistics Regulation's reviews of statistics on student migration and aspects of the Labour Force Survey later this spring.

I am copying this letter to Ian Cope at ONS, Neil McIvor and Mike Jones at DWP, Sean Whellams at HMRC, and David Blunt at the Home Office.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ed Humpherson