

---

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Neil McIvor  
Head of Profession for Statistics  
Department for Work and Pensions  
(By email)

29 March 2017

Dear Neil

**DWP Statistics: JSA and ESA sanctions**

I wrote to David Frazer, your predecessor as Head of Profession for Statistics, Department for Work and Pensions, on 5 August 2015<sup>1</sup> about the need to increase the transparency and range of statistics on benefit sanctions.

Our teams have been in contact in recent months regarding the steps that your department is taking to strengthen and extend the benefit sanction statistics. In particular, we welcome the greater consistency across the sanction statistics through the decision<sup>2</sup> to adopt the same method for other benefit types, beginning with income support sanctions and to be followed by Universal Credit. We also welcome the extension of information about the start and end dates of sanctions, to support the measurement of their duration, as well as aid data linkage.

The introduction of the monthly sanction rate has provided some insight for interpreting the trends of sanctioning; however, as I noted in my earlier letter it is important to present the broader context, for example by considering how best to reflect all instances (including non-adverse sanctions) where benefit payments are stopped.

I would be grateful if you could update me on the ways that you are seeking to deliver the wider public value in the reporting about benefit sanctions.

I am keen also to hear your thoughts about addressing the recommendations of the recent reports from the Public Accounts Committee<sup>3</sup> and National Audit Office<sup>4</sup> on benefit sanctions.

Yours sincerely,



Ed Humpherson

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/benefit-sanction-statistics/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/public-accounts-committee/benefit-sanctions/written/44767.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/benefit-sanctions-16-17/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/benefit-sanctions/>