
Director General for Regulation

Mr Mike Warren
Director of Analysis and Insight
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
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27 February 2019

Dear Mike,

Home Office report: the economic and social cost of domestic abuse in England & Wales

Robert Cuffe, Head of Statistics at BBC News, recently contacted us about the estimated cost of domestic abuse that was published in your report: [The economic and social cost of domestic abuse](#) and the associated [press release](#) that announced the publication of the draft Domestic Abuse Bill.

Mr Cuffe was concerned that the analysis in the report has the potential to triple-count the cost of abuse by using an unusual definition of the costs associated with abuse in a specific year. He also suggested that the way the results were communicated does not make the definition clear to the lay reader.

We welcome your publication of this new analysis and the transparency of the methods, but share some of the concerns raised by Mr Cuffe about how the information has been presented, particularly in the associated press release.

Your report on the economic and social cost of domestic abuse aims to estimate the costs of domestic abuse in England and Wales for the year ending 31 March 2017. It estimates a total cost of £66.2 billion, made up of three elements:

- £47.3 billion: the estimated cost to those experiencing domestic abuse for the reduction in their quality of life due to the physical and emotional harms they experience
- £14.1 billion: the estimated cost to the economy of lost output
- £4.7 billion: the estimated cost of public and other services such as private civil and criminal legal representation and charitable services

The estimated costs for reduced quality of life and lost output represent the notional loss to victims and the economy of domestic abuse over the time they experienced the abuse. Your analysts confirmed they calculated those costs over a three-year period, which was taken as the average time victims experience abuse. The first two estimates therefore represent the three-year total costs associated with victims of abuse who were identified during the year ending 31 March 2017, not the total in-year costs. The costs associated with public and other services include a mixture of estimates calculated over a three-year and a one-year period.

Your analysts assured us that they were aware of the risk of including the same costs more than once using this method (if the estimates were repeated each year) and that they have no plans to publish these estimates on annual basis.

The report was written for a technical audience with some understanding of the methods. The press release had wider circulation and was written for a lay reader. It stated that the report 'reveals [domestic abuse] cost England and Wales £66 billion in 2016 to 2017'. The press release did not make clear that the costs were estimated; that the costs were not all in-year costs; or that most of the costs were notional, rather than incurred costs.

Communications staff have a difficult job to explain technical material like this concisely. It is vital that analysts responsible for the work are able to advise on press releases to ensure that statistics are reported accurately and are not misrepresented. We understand that, in this case, some of the analyst's contributions that would have aided interpretation were not incorporated in the final version of the press release.

I am copying this letter to Andy Tighe, Director of Communications, Amanda White, Deputy Director for Crime & Policing Analysis, and David Blunt, Head of Profession for Statistics, all at the Home Office.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation