
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Steve Ellerd-Elliott
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Work and Pensions
(by email)

29 May 2019

Dear Steve

BENEFIT CAP STATISTICS

As you are aware, we recently completed a compliance check of the DWP Benefit Cap statistics. We considered the trustworthiness, quality and value of these statistics in relation to the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We have made a number of recommendations to support your continued development of these important experimental statistics.

We appreciate the positive way that the team has engaged with us during the compliance check and it was encouraging to hear of its development plans and desire to maintain contact and discuss improvements. Our Labour Market and Welfare Domain Lead, Catherine Bremner, will continue to engage with the team on progress over the coming months.

We found many examples of good practice. The background information on the statistics is clear and informative, providing a good description of what Benefit Cap is and how it works. The background and methodology document also explains the policy context and contains links to pages on the key benefits. The statistics are easily accessible and the [gov.uk landing page](#) is easy to follow, with useful links to previous publications, interactive tools, related publications and research papers, all of which help users better understand the statistics and data. We identified the need to present a clear and coherent narrative about benefit statistics in the bulletin, that is easy to read and supports use by all types of users.

We welcome the helpful summary of key points about the methods at the start of the bulletin and the detailed explanation on the limitations of the statistics in the background and methodology document. The reasons for change and their impact on the statistics are helpfully explained in depth along with how the outcome categories have changed. We have identified a range of detailed improvements that we consider could be made to the presentation of the statistics, which we have passed on to the team separately.

We are encouraged by the recent development of a regular user group and engagement with local authorities, along with embedding user engagement as part of the production process. We would encourage more engagement with external users and stakeholders to promote wider use of the statistics, to ensure user needs are understood and to maximise public value.

An essential part of assuring yourselves and users about quality, and enhancing the trustworthiness of the statistics, is to provide information about quality assurance. Producers of statistics should explain clearly how the statistics and data are accurate, reliable, coherent and timely. As these statistics are based on administrative data, the team has agreed to produce a quality report using our [Quality Assurance of Administrative Data \(QAAD\) framework](#) to assure users about the quality assurance arrangements and to help them understand how the Benefit Cap data are collected and processed. This is a good development.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Pont', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead