
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Steve Ellerd-Elliott
Chief Statistician
Department for Work and Pensions

22 April 2020

Dear Steve

UNIVERSAL CREDIT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

I am writing to welcome the publication of supplementary management information on Universal Credit yesterday by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), alongside the regular Official Statistics release, but also to share our concerns about how this differs from the information that was preannounced. Universal Credit continues to be an area of high user interest and has increasingly moved to the foreground of public debate as the UK adjusts to rapid changes in society and the economy as a result of Covid-19.

We recognise the challenging environment in which your department is working in and support the work it is doing to balance the demand for up-to-date information with ensuring relevance to users and good quality data. The statistics teams in your department have shown flexibility and responsiveness by exploring different data sources to meet this demand.

In recent weeks, this management information has been provided by ministers to give context in public statements. Following yesterday's publication, and in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), the DWP should ensure that any public statements are supported by information which is equally available to all.

It is both regrettable and concerning that some of the breakdowns of management information that your department had preannounced last week and raised with the Work and Pensions Committee were not published yesterday. On 15 April 2020, the DWP preannounced the release of supplementary management information and stated it would include breakdowns by geography and key characteristics. Prior to this Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary of the DWP, [wrote](#) to the chair of the Work and Pensions Committee on the 3rd April 2020 stating the DWP was expecting to publish a set of supplementary data on Universal Credit including the number of declarations, the number of awards, the number of advances and information relating to the busiest times of the day for calls and other relevant performance information. Yesterday, however, the DWP only [published information](#) on the number of households and individuals making a Universal Credit declaration and the number of Universal Credit advances by type of advance.

The labour market will continue to feel the effects of Covid-19 over the coming months and therefore user demand for the timely, relevant data this management information provides will probably persist. We hope that the DWP will publish the remaining breakdowns that it had preannounced and we look forward to seeing this information published on a regular basis for the duration it remains relevant to users. It is our understanding that the DWP had already been working on these breakdowns. As management information produced by the DWP is subject to [voluntary application](#) of the Code of Practice for Statistics, the DWP should look to enhance its trustworthiness by publishing information

it had committed publicly to release. Not doing so creates a risk to both transparency and to public understanding.

The DWP should be transparent about the frequency it intends to publish this management information once it has been determined. We will keep in touch with the statistics team as part of our ongoing monitoring of statistics on Universal Credit.

I am copying this letter to Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary of the DWP.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation