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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Sean Whellams  
Head of Profession for Statistics  
HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)  
(by email)

18 November 2020

Dear Sean

**Working-age benefit combination statistics**

I am writing to you following our assessment of benefit statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) against the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Our assessment report highlights strong user interest in the [experimental working-age benefit combination statistics](#), which illustrate possible and the most common combinations of benefits that are claimed. Users told us that they would really value the insights that could be drawn by the addition of Tax Credits and Child Benefit data to these statistics (which are administered by HMRC), to gain a complete picture of the provision of benefits in Great Britain.

We are pleased that DWP and HMRC are already working together to develop a joint annual publication on the numbers of individuals claiming common combinations of benefits that DWP and HMRC are responsible for, on a common snapshot date. This close collaboration follows a similar joined-up approach in developing the [children in low-income families](#) publication which was released for the first time in March 2020. Those new statistics provide insights that have proved beneficial in increasing users' understanding of child poverty and its prevalence.

Taking a similar joined up approach to benefit statistics will improve the coherence of data concerning the welfare system – particularly in the short term where COVID-19 has resulted in heightened interest of benefit statistics. These necessary insights will help develop the evidence base for decision makers to take a targeted approach to deliver support during this challenging period. While recognising that you are working to overcome challenges with producing 100% extracts from administrative systems in a way which aligns with the data held by DWP, I encourage you to continue your close collaboration with DWP, and to ensure that this development can be completed quickly to enhance the public value of benefit statistics.

If you have any questions about our findings, our Labour Market and Welfare team is happy to engage with you and your team.

I am copying this letter to Steve Ellerd-Elliott, Chief Statistician at 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