
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Steve Ellerd-Elliott
Chief Statistician
(by email)

18 November 2020

Dear Steve

Assessment of the Department for Work and Pensions' Benefit Statistics

We have today published the assessment report on these statistics. I am grateful for the positive engagement of your team throughout the assessment process.

The [DWP benefit statistics](#) publication brings together key statistics on DWP administered benefits and acts as a compendium of benefit statistics, where the frequency and reference date vary across the benefits. The statistics provide valuable insight into the changing welfare system. There has been heightened interest during the COVID-19 pandemic and DWP has shown its ability to respond and adapt to changing demands by providing real-time insights into the take up of Universal Credit.

We found that DWP has a range of policies in place that ensure strong data governance, including an information management policy and a policy statement on confidentiality and access. These measures enhance trustworthiness and give users confidence that the data are being managed securely.

The report also highlights some improvements that we consider necessary to enhance the public value of the statistics. Making these improvements is necessary to ensure that these statistics can continue to be badged as National Statistics.

Our findings point to a lot of untapped potential in the statistics. We identified a strong need for DWP to engage more proactively with users to understand their needs, rather than relying on users reaching out to the team. Insufficient user engagement has led to developments not being aligned with priorities for users and key data gaps remaining unfilled, embedding more-strategic user engagement into the production and development of the statistics would ensure they keep pace with statistics on Universal Credit and remain valuable to users.

Information about the quality of the statistics does not support users' understanding of the strengths and limitations of the statistics and risks the data being misinterpreted. Signposting between Stat-Xplore (DWP's interactive tabulation tool) and the DWP landing pages for the statistics needs to be improved to ensure users are equipped to interpret and use the statistics appropriately.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation