
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

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

09 December 2020

Dear Sean

Geographical disaggregation of Eat Out to Help Out data

I am writing to you with regards to statistics you released last month on the UK government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme.

We welcome the publication of these statistics. Thank you for confirming that delay to the publication was for reasons related to quality assurance of the data - it is important that you have confidence in the statistics when you publish.

However, we understand there was an expectation from users that this data release would be accompanied by some level of geographical breakdown. There is user demand for disaggregated data, and a significant further delay in publishing would mitigate their public value. In response to a Freedom of Information request for such information earlier this year, it was advised that this data would be published in the future.

Previously published parliamentary-constituency level management information was also removed due to quality issues. The reasons for withdrawing these data were not fully explained to users at the time of their removal and no time scale for further information was provided.

Our view is that users of the Eat Out to Help Out data should be provided with more clarity on HMRC's future plans to publish disaggregated data, including what you plan to publish and when. It would also help to mitigate the lack of detailed data if a broader level of disaggregation could be published, such as at regional levels, in the first instance, whilst you work on the more complex parliamentary constituency or local authority level breakdowns.

We appreciate the huge resource pressures currently facing HMRC. In spite of this, HMRC has recently published disaggregated information on the COVID Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and this demonstrates commendable attention to public value for these high value and ongoing support schemes.

I am copying this letter to Kate Sweeney, the lead statistician responsible for the Eat Out to Help Out statistics.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation