
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

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

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Dear Sean

Child and Working Tax Credit statistics

Thank you for your team's cooperation in our recent review of HMRC's [Child and Working Tax Credits statistics](#) and its commitment to developing the trustworthiness, quality and value of these statistics. We chose to carry out this compliance check as part of our follow-up monitoring of HMRC's progress against the recommendations set out in the [quality review](#) of HMRC's official statistics that we completed last year. This letter confirms our findings.

We have found much to commend in terms of the progress HMRC has made against our recommendations:

- We welcome the additional quality assurance (QA) steps that are being taken by HMRC for these statistics to address the recommendations in the quality review by making a more consistent and auditable use of QA checklists and using an additional QA exemplar template. The publication of updated quality reports for the personal tax credits [provisional awards](#) and [small area data \(LSOA\)](#) statistics gives confidence to users and provide a clear explanation of the differences between the provisional results published in December and the finalised results published in June.
- We are pleased to see the launch of a HMRC-wide [user consultation](#) which will help HMRC to gain user feedback on its proposed developments to these statistics.
- Whilst the tax credits system is managed by HMRC, other facets of the welfare system, including Universal Credit, are the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). We are pleased to hear that HMRC is actively collaborating with DWP to support users' understanding of changes within the statistics as tax credits customers migrate to Universal Credit. We welcome the new joint release for [Children in Low-Income Families](#) statistics, which replaced two sets of statistics that were previously published separately. Further collaboration will provide greater insight into the overall picture of welfare support and enhance the quality of the statistics.

- As part of this collaboration with DWP, HMRC intends to consolidate its tax credit releases to provide a more streamlined and holistic set of statistics. This will help to enhance the value and insight that users can gain from the statistical releases.

We have identified some areas where we consider that the statistics could be enhanced, which we encourage you to consider, along with user feedback, in order to ensure that the highest standards of the Code of Practice continue to be met:

- Offer users further reassurance that QA arrangements consider the risks associated with using administrative data by acknowledging limitations, such as misreporting. We support the team in prioritising process mapping for Child Benefit statistics in Spring 2021. A good example of what this could look like can be found on page 31 of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [Social housing lettings in England: April 2017 to March 2018](#).
- Maximise the value gained from the user consultation by publishing the results of the consultation and demonstrating how the feedback will inform future development plans for the statistics. OSR recently published [guidance on user engagement](#), which HMRC should benefit from considering as part of its consultation.
- Evaluate whether improvements could be made to the tax credits landing page, to make it clearer for users. Currently, notifications about delays to the release of the statistics are left in the release calendar and might be better communicated on the main webpage for these statistics. The user consultation would also benefit from being linked on the main landing page. The visibility of such notices should be reviewed to ensure users are kept up to date on changes to plans.
- Be more innovative in the visual presentation of future statistics and look for opportunities in the user consultation to find out what would be useful to users in terms of graphics, tables and filters to aid usability.

Thank you again for the positive engagement your team have shown during this review. We look forward to hearing an update from HMRC on its plans for the statistics in summer 2021.

I am also copying this letter to Jane Whittaker, Director of Knowledge Analysis and Intelligence at HMRC, and to Kate Sweeney, David Bailey and Susan Hanley of the Benefits and Credits statistics team.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead